Leadership interaction skill development through equine experiences

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Abstract

Date 28.5.2019

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Degree programme Degree Programme in Communication Management	
Report/thesis title Leadership interaction skill development through equine experiences	**Number of pages and appendix pages** 101 + 16

The skills required at work are changing due to automation, digitization and a change in the personal attitudes towards working. More often, work requires intellectual abilities and complex problem-solving skills. For leaders, these changes mean that having strong social skills is becoming more important. However, the fact that many leaders rise from a strong technical background may result in limited knowledge on the importance of social and interaction skills when leading others.

In 2015 there was discussion on equestrian females becoming better leaders than on average and since then the author started to notice other articles connecting horses and leadership skills. When investigating leadership interaction and finding a solution on how to support leaders in their social skill development these articles gave the initial idea of using equines in leadership training.

This master's thesis investigates leadership interaction and how equines can be used in leadership training. The main goal of this study is to investigate and test the validity of using horses in a constructed equine leadership interaction pilot training designed and held by the author in Finland, in September 2018.

The theoretical framework is based on leadership, interaction and equines in human use. These include themes on communication, emotional intelligence and experiential learning.

This development project was conducted using the constructive research approach using qualitative data collection methods. The intention was to build towards recommendations for change and by using a pilot group to bring together theory and practice, action and reflection.

Keywords
Leadership, soft skills, interaction, interpersonal communication, emotional intelligence, skill development, equine, horse

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1   Introduction

Technology is modifying the labor market as machines and robots are taking over work duties. While this happens, some of the older skill requirements from employees are disappearing and new are emerging. One of the most needed skills is the ability to act in social situations. (Jokinen & Sieppi 2018, 48.) An increasing number of employers are paying more attention and consider them as important as academic qualifications. Overall, an increasing amount of work requires cooperation with each other. The amount of time that leaders and employees need to spend together working has increased by more than 50% in the past two decades. In addition to this, modern workplaces support cooperation as the amount of open plan work places is increasing. There is an obligation to interact and work together with others. (World Economic Forum 2017.)

Employees have become strategically important for organizations. Employees need to be taken care of even better, which means taking into consideration their demands. Now, employees do not just influence the organizations performance, but act as brand ambassadors and advocates. When employees are content they are more likely to stay in the same employment relationship for longer and spread a positive image of the organization to others. (Men 2014, 265-268.)

Employee happiness is affected by leadership. Based on research, when leaders communicate efficiently, employees are more satisfied. The new generation of employees is highly educated and more intelligent compared to the past and they greatly conduct work with knowledge. Their needs are not satisfied by commanding leaders. On the contrary, leaders need to listen to, persuade and negotiate with employees, which requires excellent communication skills and an understanding of emotions. (Madlock 2008, 62.)

Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer (2009, abstract) discusses the importance of interpersonal communication competence of leaders, when it comes to organizations that rely on knowledge. Leaders are required to mentor expert work and manage tensions that arise from superior-subordinate relationships. Being competent in interpersonal communication does not only mean succeeding in verbal communication, but also non-verbality, which is important when it comes to communicating the emotional state. (Trenholm & Jensen 2013, 10, 72.)

This master's thesis approaches leadership development from the interaction perspective. As interaction skills are linked to communication the focus is on interpersonal

communication. As a product, this thesis investigates how leadership interaction skills can be developed with the use of equines and tests this in practice with a pilot training. Using horses in leadership development is quite undiscovered and unexplored in Finland and comparable material is a challenge to find.

Generally, equines have been used in therapeutic and disability treatment. As the Professional Association of Therapeutic Horsemanship International (PATH) explains, the idea behind equine-assisted-learning is not to learn how to ride, but to develop skills like communication, and learning about oneself and one's feelings. (PATH 2019). It has been discussed how the leadership training marketplace is packed with various options, and that using equines could be seen as a fashionable thing. However, including equines does add a new element to the 'traditional' indoor, outdoor and experiential trainings. Furthermore, the fact that more creative approaches for leadership development are emerging the more it means that there is a shift towards a new type of work ethic, which supports exploring this topic further. (Kelly 2014, 218-219.)

This thesis has not been directed to any specific case company. The possibility of using equines in leadership development training is presented by using the authors own observations, interviewing an HR consultant, benchmarking and by conducting a pilot group training. The purpose of conducting a pilot training is to test initial reactions and hypothesis towards equine leadership development training. In addition to this, gathering theoretical understanding from relevant literature takes place.

Next, the thesis explains how the research was conducted and the used methods. The constructive research approach was utilized. The data has been collected from personal observations as the development project began with the author's own interests in the subject, combined with observations from the workplace. HR consultant interviews and questionnaires to an open audience were also used for data collection. To test the use of equines in leadership training in practice, a Pilot Group training was held in September 2018 and data has been collected from the participants.

The final parts of the thesis discuss the construction, evaluation, findings and development suggestions from the held pilot group training. After which final conclusions are made.

1.1 Research objectives and research questions

The overall objective of this thesis has been to find a real current problem and produce a solution to solve the issue (Oyegoke 2011, 576). The starting point for the topic came from the discussion on leadership competences, which had been arising in the society. The author had noticed articles which connected, leadership, horses and soft skills. These articles are listed in chapter 6.2.1 and the article themes can be found in Appendix 1.

After reading the articles, the author started to have a higher amount of interest towards the matter theoretically and finding out how leaders could be supported to cope in the changing working environment and meeting employee needs. This is also very related and relevant to the authors current work. The author's interest to innovate and implement the use of equines in leadership interaction development came from having a personal interest in horse riding and finding a potential business idea. Hence, this thesis is mainly conducted for the authors own purpose and acts as a background information study for the possibility of a future business.

Furthermore, while the possibilities were being explored the author coincidentally noticed a lack of trainings in Organization X for newly promoted leaders. This situation was an opportunity to design and provide these leaders with a modern leadership training. Based on this the development of a leadership development training using equines was fully initiated.

More specifically, this thesis aims to find out how leadership interaction skills can be developed with the use of equines. With support from the theoretical framework a deeper understanding on the factors, which are important in leadership and can be developed with the help of equines are investigated. To attempt to develop leadership interaction skills in practice, this thesis conducts a pilot group training with the use of equines. This will be described and discussed in Chapter 7.

The research questions have been determined based on phenomena and relevant theories (Oyegoke 2011, 576). The main objective of this study is to find out if using equines in leadership interaction development is sufficient. The main research question is: **How to develop leadership interaction skills with the use of equines?**

The following sub questions were created to support the research question:

1. What is leadership?
2. What is interaction?
3. What kind of equine training is applicable to be used in leadership interaction competence development?

1.2 Thesis structure

This thesis comprises of eight chapters. First, the thesis begins by introducing the topic. Chapters 2, 3 and 4 are relevant theories to the topic. Chapter 5 explains how equines are used by humans and how they can be used theoretically to assist learning. Next, chapter 6 explains how the research was conducted and chapter 7 describes the Pilot Training construction and findings. Lastly, Chapter 8 is about the conclusions and gives suggestions for future research.

The structure of the thesis can be seen below in Figure 1.
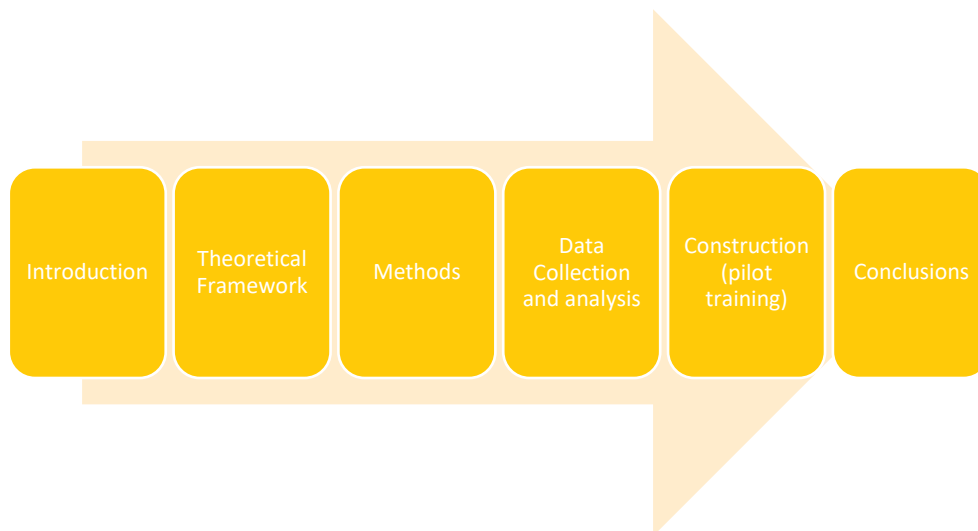
Figure 1 Thesis Structure

1.3 Key terms and concepts

Leadership	in its role it is expected to ''motivate, direct, evaluate, correct, and work with the group in an efficient manner while ensuring high-quality production'' (Trenholm & Jensen 2003, 307).
Interaction	is seen from a communication perspective being a part of communication. Interaction is present when individuals communicate with each other and there is a message that is being exchanged verbally and non-verbally (Isotalus & Rajalahti 2017, 15-16).
Communication	is considered as a human activity and as a process which constantly changes. Communication occurs when people are in relationship with each other and when they share meaning collectively (Trenholm & Jensen 2013, 5-6).
Interpersonal communication	is verbal and non-verbal interaction generally between two people, who have a relationship. The actions of the individuals have an impact on each other and the relationship (Devito 2016, 26).
Equine	is a mammal from the Equidae family. These include modern horses, zebras and asses (Encyclopaedia Britannica).
Equine-Assisted-Learning	''is an experiential learning approach that promotes the development of life skills for educational, professional and personal goals by doing activities with the help of equines'' (PATH Int 2015).
Emotional Intelligence (EI)	''refers to the competence to identify and express emotions, understand emotions, assimilate emotions in thought, and regulate both positive and negative emotions in oneself and others'' (Matthews, Zeidner & Roberts 2002, xv).
Special experts	Are considered to be employees who are highly educated and have special expertise or knowledge. This can be theoretical or analytical knowledge that is used to solve problems. This group can also be referred to as knowledge workers (Ivancevich & Duening 2001, xii-xiv).
Social skills	Communication, interaction and social skills are to a great extent compatible with each other and concepts of social skills have been used to describe the needed know-how in human interaction. (Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer 2009, 20)

2   Leadership

As working life and society develops and transforms leadership requirements go through change. It has been estimated that in the beginning of the twentieth century the amount of work that required physical strength fell from 80% to 20% in the US (Ivancevich & Duening 2001, 9). More recently, the European Data Market Study (2017) report estimated that there were 6.1 million data workers (knowledge workers) in Europe and that this number has been increasing since 2013.

Työelämä 2020 (2018, 12) studied leadership in Finland. The study raised expertise to be the strength of Finnish leaders and that Finnish leadership is commonly efficient and solution oriented. However, little focus is put on the employees and humanness. In addition to this, the study discussed that many leaders rise to become a leader from a worker position and a good at reading numbers. Isotalus and Rajalahti (2017, 161) interviewed several business leaders, whom all stated that leadership is about interactions. Furthermore, and in line with Isotalus and Rajalahti one of the development points Työelämä 2020 (2018, 21) report stated for Finnish leadership is to learn to have a better conversation culture where the most important tools needed are speech, interaction skills and being present. Now, employees need meaningfulness and a feeling of being heard and all in all a more psychological approach.

Leadership can be a stressful position in an organization. It has been noted that the stress of the leader does not only influence behaviour and interaction but can have further effects on e.g. leader-follower relationships. At work, stress can come from the job itself, interpersonal stress from being in conflict with others, or from arising feelings. In general, stress is triggered by something that cannot be predicted or controlled. Stress has physiological effects. (Harms, Credé, Tynan, Leon & Jeung 2017,178.) When one is put in difficult situations the body reacts and causes physical reactions, like releases adrenaline into the bloodstream and affects the heartbeat rate. Furthermore, stress can cause emotional symptoms like depression or a quick temper. Emotions are contagious and affect behavior, which is why they play an important role at work. (Bal, Campbell & McDowell-Larsen 2008, 8-9, 21.)

Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer (2009, 13) discusses that the work done in postmodern organizations is different. It is based on special expertise and knowledge that comes from employees who are highly educated. Hence, the actual tool for completing work is intangible, which is the opposite when comparing to the industrial society when work was mostly operational with a concretely visible and easily transferrable process. Now,

information and social capital plays a significant role. Traditional leadership and organizing and managing work does not work as the nature of the work is not operational. Hence, a different approach and skills in leadership are needed. (Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer 2009, 13.)

Knowledge based work can be done individually or in teams, but the most central part in this type of work is the way information is used and created, and how the employees interact with each other. Hence, the importance of interaction becomes indisputable as the organization's competitiveness is dependent on employee knowledge and their ability to work together. The duty of the leader is to support the creative work of the employees and enable the ''collaborative interaction processes'' of the team. (Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer 2009, 13.) All in all, organizations have no choice but to move away from the traditional understanding that the leader tells the subordinates exactly what to do. Instead, the leader is the one who needs to support and make sure that employees have the means to work to their maximum ability. (Trenholm & Jensen 2003, 307-308.)

From the existing leadership theories transformational leadership meets the needs of modern employees. Research on this leadership style has shown a positive and high-level impact on employee satisfaction. (Mujkic, Sehic, Rahimic & Jusic 2014, 266.) This style is people oriented and aims to create an emotional connection between the leader and subordinates by appealing to self-esteem and self-actualization. It uses elements like ''empathy, compassion, sensitivity, relationship building and innovation'', many of which are important elements of emotional intelligence. (Men 2014, 266.)

2.1   Leadership paradigms

While the general job description for a leader has stayed the same, the tasks it consists of are not so straight forward any longer. Special experts are far from old-fashioned subordinates as they wish to be treated as equal partners. In addition to this, employees are not purely motivated with financial incentives, but require leaders that are actively present and available for support. (Lappalainen 2013, 12.) To support employee motivation, leadership should be informal, and communication should flow easily. Relationships between people should be considered as more important than the results. (Thoren 2017, 216.)

As there is no one exact definition to what leadership is, four leadership paradigms have been created to enable a common understanding on the matter. These can be seen below in Table 1. The four paradigms are Classical, Transactional, Visionary and Organic in

characteristic. The oldest paradigm, classical leadership, is about dominance, whilst the newest and most contradicting approach is organic leadership, which is about reducing the importance of having one formal leader. (Avery 2004, 26-28.)

Table 1 Leadership Paradigms (adapted from Avery 2004, 28)

Leadership Characteristic	Classical	Transactional	Visionary	Organic
Major Era	Antiquity 1970s	1970s-mid 1980s	Mid 1980s- 2000	After 2000
Basis of leadership	Leader dominance using respect and power. Command and control.	Interpersonal influence over and consideration of followers. Creating suitable environment for management.	Emotion – leaders motivate followers.	Mutual sense-making from inside the group. Leaders arise naturally instead of being officially pointed.
Source of follower commitment	Fear or respect towards the leader. Acquiring rewards or refraining from disciplinary actions.	Negotiated rewards, agreements and expectations.	Sharing the vision. Leader charisma may be involved, personalized consideration.	Agreement with the groups values and processes. Self-control.
Vision	The vision of the leader is irrelevant to the followers.	Vision is not fundamental and is possibly not communicated or explained.	Vision is central and followers are able to take part is the leaders vision.	Vision is formed by the group and can be considered to be a strong cultural element.

Still in many twentieth-century organizations, the commanding and controlling style can be seen. **Classical leadership** does not suit knowledge workers as the work relies on something that is not visible, which means that the leader cannot command and control every action. In addition to this, it is based on the idea that there is one person with great amounts of information. However, knowledge workers can actually have better knowledge than the leader. **Transactional leaders** need to have power to reward or punish their followers to keep them on board for a short term. Together with classical leadership, transactional leadership is better suited for stable situations, rather than a fast-changing environment. **Visionary leaders** set a clear vision for the future and motivate followers to work towards this. This requires emotional commitment from the followers. On the negative side, ''followers can become dependent on Visionary leaders, believing that the leader has everything under control. Innovation can be restrained if people become reluctant to disagree with a Visionary leader. To overcome these problems, visionary leaders are advised to keep the size of their units small. The larger the group, the more difficult it is for the leader to take account of individuals' needs and to motivate each member''. **Organic leadership** is not based on position power and there may not even be a formal leader. All group members can be leaders at the same time, or one can be considered as a leader for a certain project based on experience and knowledge. (Avery 2004, 29-39.)

Engineers can be considered as knowledge workers. In many cases their leaders come from a different background, experience, intelligence level and place in time. For this type of workers, the commanding and controlling leadership style does not work. (Ivancevich & Duening 2001, xii-xiv.) The local Finnish media has discussed that knowledge workers want to be led by someone seen in high esteem or who is considered to have unique knowledge and uses emotional intelligence. An expert organization will improve in well-being and efficiency when leaders have self-knowledge, good interactions skills and emotional intelligence. (Mustonen 2010.)

Kolari (2010, 13) confirms the assumptions by the media and that classical leadership is not sufficient in the modern work environment. Modern leadership studies explore leadership as a social interaction between the leader and employee, where emotional awareness and understanding is required. Ivanevich and Dening (2001, xv-xvi) state that to successfully lead employees that rely on knowledge rather than physical strength, deep individual understanding is needed. This means taking into consideration ''background, intellectual capabilities, needs, wants and levels of loyalty''. Leaders need to learn how and what the employees think, how they communicate and how they work. Learning this happens with communication and working together with the employees.

2.2 Leadership competences and skills

Viitala (2005, 439-441) discusses that leadership is built in a hierarchical manner and includes six competences, as shown in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2 Hierarchical model of management competencies (adapted from Viitala 2005)

The competencies higher up are easier to improve, while the ones lower are more complex. The nearer the competence is to the bottom of the pyramid the more important it

is when it comes to the performance of the leader. The higher up the pyramid the competence is the more it relates to education and previous experiences in working life.

Technical competencies on the top of the pyramid can be considered to be hard skills. This competency is needed to handle process or function contents, like the use of different work tools. *Business competencies* are general management related, like strategic perception or budgeting and forecasting costs. *Knowledge management competencies* include both business and leadership competencies. More specifically, this includes analytical understanding, complex problem-solving skills and helping the learning of others. *Leadership and supervisory competencies* is about leading others. It includes themes from both the previous level of knowledge management but also incorporates the need of social competencies. (Viitala 2005, 439-441.)

Intrapersonal and social competencies on the bottom of the model are connected to personal traits and growth and seen as the hardest to master. *Social competences* can be referred to as *interpersonal competencies* and are about social relations. This includes stakeholder relationship building and understanding people on a deeper level, and being able to communicate, interact and motivate. *Intrapersonal competencies* refer to personality and consists of self-image, motives and values. Capabilities like self-confidence and conflict resolution are considered important. (Viitala 2005, 439-441.)

Leaders need to have job-specific 'hard skills', like computer programming or mastering a foreign language, buy the also need interpersonal ''soft' skills'' or ''people skills''. For effective leadership these skills include self-awareness, empathy, self-regulation and motivation. (Fojt 2004, 21.) The further up one goes in the organization, the more important strategic skills become, as the aim is to enhance the company's successfulness and competitiveness according to the vision. From Figure 3 it can be noticed that for all the three levels social/people skills play an equally important part. In its core leadership is about helping others perform well. (Rouhiainen-Neunhäser 2009, 21.)

Furthermore, the figure below shows that in working life social and people skills play an equally important role. At the lowest level there are professionals/experts, whom can be e.g. software engineers. Their need for hard skills, which makes them strive in their work technically, is more important on this level than for the others. In the middle lies the middle management or team leaders. For them the importance of hard skills reduces and the need for strategic skills grow, but the importance of social skills remains the same as before. On the top at the executive level the need for strategic skills grows, but the need for social skills remains the same. Goleman (2009, 31-33) states that the importance of

emotional intelligence increases the higher up in an organization one goes. Emotional intelligence is the differentiating factor when it comes to average and extraordinary leaders.

Top management/Executives	Strategic skills
Middle management / Team leaders	Social/people skills
Professionals/experts	Hard skills (expert competence)

Figure 3 Leadership skills (adapted from Company X training material)

Social skills are important, but hard to master. Hard skills are easier to learn and usually the learning happens with a defined and systematic process. However, learning social and interpersonal skills is more complex and as organizations are becoming less hierarchical, these skills become even more important. (Fojt 2004, 21.)

2.2.1 Interaction skills in leadership

Men (2014, 266) states that leadership is greatly executed with communication. The communication competence, methods used, and quality can influence employee mindset and behavior. Following on, as discussed by Isotalus and Rajalahti (2017, 14-35) studies have shown that interaction skills are important for a leader as they influence employee work performance, satisfaction, organizational commitment and wellbeing. In a leader and subordinate relationship, the way emotions are handled in communication can be very complex in interaction. A leader comes across different types of situations where emotional awareness is needed, like giving feedback. These situations require the leader to be able to socially deliver and understand emotions but also be in control and retain professionalism.

Steelman and Rutkowski (2004, 6-9) discuss the effects of feedback and that there are multiple variables which may affect the reactions of the recipient. These variables are source credibility, quality of feedback and the way feedback is given. Moreover, the feedback situation includes the elements of trustworthiness and even the emotional state of the feedback giver.

Interpersonal communication competence is a precondition when it comes to skills required from leaders to be able to perform well professionally. Leadership interpersonal communication competence consists of having the competence to communicate and interact efficiently and meaningfully. This means being able to use information from interaction and understand one's own behavior and its effects in interaction, the capability to send messages efficiently and meaningfully, and the motivation to communicate and interact with others. (Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer 2009, 11.)

2.3 Leadership interaction development

Interaction skills can be learnt and developed, but this requires modifying behavior. It can be developed with trainings but can also be improved from obtaining experiences. When learning happens based on experiences, strong skills are needed in observing and evaluating oneself to find out what could be improved and how. A more certain way is to participate in a communication training. (Isotalus & Rajalahti 2017, 27.)

The importance of interpersonal communication competence is emphasized in different working life and leadership scenarios, as well as when it comes to developing training content for professionals. Developing leadership is seen as one of the methods to improve the competitive advantage of an organization. More specifically, communication and interaction skill development is highlighted. As a result, communication is more often included in the content of trainings. (Rouhiainen- Neunhäser 2009, 14, 22, 50) Furthermore, a leader can develop social competences by learning new information about the interaction and its processes. This can happen by applying the current understanding of effective and appropriate communication in new types of interaction situations. Or, by pursuing more effective and appropriate interaction behaviors by practicing different communication and interaction skills.

3   Interpersonal communication

Interpersonal communication happens when two people are exchanging information. Communication is a social activity that can take place when humans start to have a relationship with each other and when they share their understanding. It is explained to be ''a process whereby humans collectively create and regulate social reality''. As a process it is continuous as what is communicated is affected by previous events and messages that have been sent. It goes through constant change. (Trenholm & Jensen 2013, 5-6, 24.)

The process of communication can be used as a tool for persuasion, discouragement, to show frustration, to cause emotional pain, to comfort and so on. As communication is very personal and related to individual experiences, perceptions and expectations challenges arise. Two individuals may have very different perspective on the same matter. Each individual participating in communication has an effect on the relationship. For the relationship to be successful the individuals need to be competent communicators. (Trenholm & Jensen 2013, 8-9.)

Interpersonal communication is not a natural competence a person has, although the skills related are important throughout one's life. Humans are born with the ability to learn to communicate. However, learning how to form and understand messages requires self-knowledge and understanding of others, being able to interpret situations and having the capability to ''select and sequence'' the right messages to achieve the set goals. To be able to do this requires time and practice. (Solomon & Theiss 2013, 14-16.)

3.1   Communication competence model

Trenholm and Jensen (2013, 9) define communication competence as ''the ability to communicate in a personally effective and socially appropriate manner''. This is explained in Figure 4 below. The model has two levels: **surface level** performative competence, which can be seen and observed externally and **deeper level** process competence, which is invisible and consists of conscious intellectual activities like understanding when it is a good time to give a compliment.
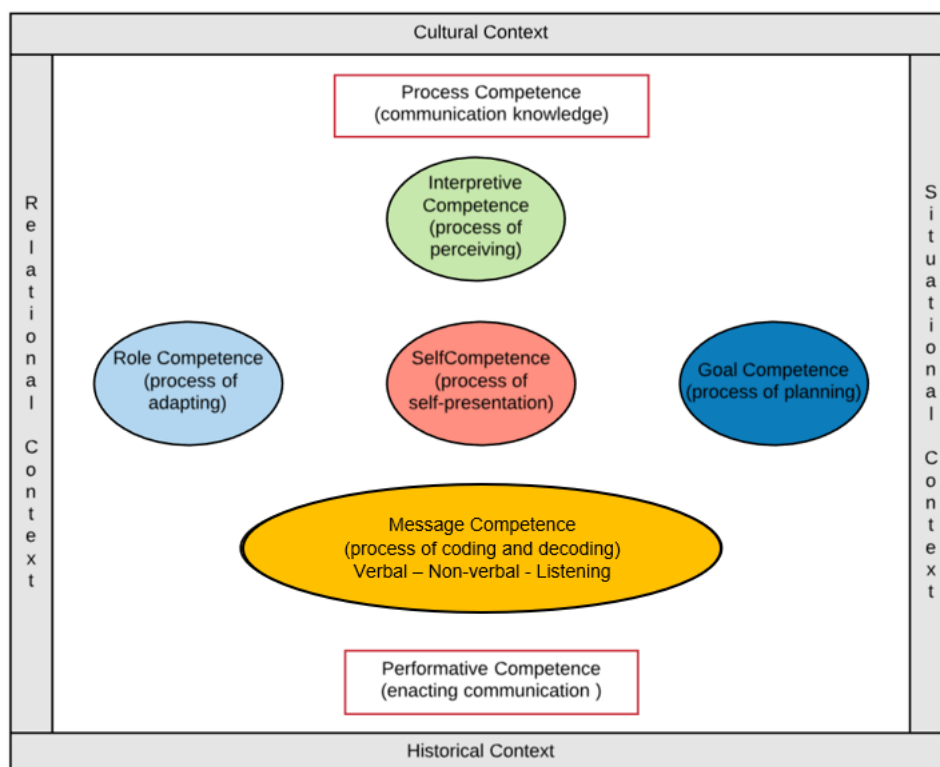
Figure 4 Communication competence model (adapted from Trenholm & Jensen 2013, 9)

When looking at the communication competence model five processes take place, one in each competence:

- **Message Competence** (process of coding and decoding) is about being able to send messages that are understandable to others and to understand the messages that are sent by others. This requires competence in using verbal and non-verbal cues, together with listening and understanding what is being sent.
- **Interpretive competence** (process of perceiving) is being able to recognize the meaningful details. This means being able to understand the situation and people. In addition to this, understanding one's own feelings and needs is important.
- **Role Competence** (process of adapting) is about being able to present oneself in the desired manner that can be considered as appropriate in the given role and surroundings.
- **Self-Competence** (process of self-presentation) works with role competence. This relates to self-image and having an idea on who one is as an individual and being able to express this individuality to others. Having a good self-concept is important. As in case this is negative one may begin to avoid situations, communicate hesitantly and self-consciously. Others may see this as inconsistent.
- **Goal Competence** (process of planning) is about achieving something, which is being aimed towards with communication. This requires being effective when it comes to sending messages.
  (Trenholm and Jensen 2013, 10-13.)

Trenholm and Jensen (2013, 18) state that all five competencies are needed to be good in communication. They continue to state that in order to become a master in communication practice is needed.

3.2 Non-Verbal communication

When looking at the communication competence model more closely the content of the message competence is the first people tend to think of when it comes to communication. This consists of; verbal, non-verbal and listening skills. This competence is about being aware on how to effectively send messages and how to understand them. (Trenholm & Jensen 2013, 10, 46.)

Interaction is usually initiated by non-verbal communication and different cues like eye contact and gestures (Trenholm & Jensen 2013, 47). The way how one comes across to another is highly dependent on both verbal and non-verbal communication, but non-verbal cues can play an even more important role. Furthermore, non-verbal communication is critical when it comes to determining the communication relationship with other people and assessing the plausibility of the speaker. (Isotalus & Rajalahti 2017, 19.) Trenholm and Jensen (2013, 49-50) also state that non-verbal behaviour can evoke powerful messages. Often, it is considered more trustworthy than what is communicated verbally. When non-verbal communication is in line with verbal communication the message is strengthened, and when out of line the message is weakened.

However, often theoretical and practical conceptions of communication skills accentuate the role of verbality and undermine the importance of non-verbality. Nonetheless, it has been estimated that up to 60% of the meaning in a social situation is communicated non-verbally and research indicates that when there is a conflict in communication non-verbality is more believable than verbality. (Greene & Burleson 2003, 179.) Trenholm and Jensen (2013, 47) explain that the reason why people find non-verbal communication more credible is since it has a longer evolutionary history.

Non-verbal cues can be visual (the use of personal space, body language, gestures, eye contact, facial expression), auditory (vocal characteristics like the pitch, tempo, intensity, sounds of moaning or whining). The cues can even be invisible (chronemic (role of time), oflactic (smell) or haptic (touch). Touching in particular can be used to signal various things like friendliness, anger or support. Touching itself is considered to be an encouraging element of friendship, but is not directly appropriate in all contexts and can vary in each situation. (Trenholm & Jensen 2013, 52-66.)

As per Trenholm & Jensen (2013, 50-51) non-verbality has three functions:

1. to '''express meaning in and of themselves''. This is about informing others how they are felt about and how the relationship is seen as. These can be matters of showing like or dislike to the other person, by displaying status or by responding to the person with emotions.
2. reflect to what was said in the previous paragraph and how non-verbal messages can affect verbal messages. They can complement, contradict or even strengthen specific words. Non-verbal messages can also be used as substitutes to verbal messages.
3. to manage the interaction happening between people and aims to make the task easier, or harder.

All in all, non-verbal behaviour informs others of our emotional state. Due to this one needs to be aware on what may be communicated non-verbally and how it may come across to others. The communication of emotions can often be challenging and unsuccessful. By understanding feelings better and being able to communicate them more effectively this become easier. Non-verbal communication is not just about expressing one's own emotions and feelings. It is also about listening to others. By observing and reflecting on non-verbal cues sent by others, interpreting the truth may become easier and possible misunderstandings and inconveniences can be avoided. (Trenholm & Jensen 2013, 72-74.)

4   Emotional intelligence

As defined by Matthews et al (2002, 4, xv) emotional intelligence (EI) is about being able to ''identify and express emotions, understand emotions, assimilate emotions in thought, and regulate both positive and negative emotions in oneself and others''. Behind the growing importance of EI is that society today sees the role of intelligence and healthy emotions as more and more important. It has even been stated that the importance of having high emotional intelligence levels is more important than having a high intelligence quotidian (IQ). Goleman (2009,7) states that emotional intelligence is not about letting all feelings loose, but rather being able to manage and utilize them effectively in the correct situation.

Trenholm and Jensen (2013, 124) point towards the same direction as Matthews. Generally, it has been claimed that to consider a person intelligent one needs to be talented in understanding abstract ideas, ability to interpret complicated matters and reason logically. These have been measured in IQ. However, this has been questioned and it is argued that humans have ''multiple intelligencies'' to help with problem solving and environmental adaptation. One of these is emotional intelligence.

It has been suggested that self-aware individuals, who are sensitive to others, are good at managing their affairs. On the contrary, those that are less successful in these are more likely to have unsuccessful in relationships. (Matthews et al. 2002, 3.) Trenholm and Jensen (2013,124) discuss that there is a growing amount of research that confirms positive results from being emotionally intelligent. They also state that EI can help with relationship management and ''as EI rises, so does academic performance, measures of relatedness and the ability to communicate motivating messages.''

4.1   Emotional intelligence framework

The idea of emotional intelligence has been very influential and Goleman (2009) produced a list of attributes of the emotionally intelligent leader. The emotional intelligence framework by Goleman focuses on two competencies: personal competence and social competence. The adapted framework can be seen below in Table 2.

Table 2 Emotional Competency Framework adapted from Goleman (2009)

Personal Competence *Managing oneself*	Social Competence *Handling relations with others*
Self-Awareness • Emotional awareness • Accurate self-assessment • Self-confidence	**Social Skills** • Influence • Communication • Conflict management • Leadership • Change Catalyst • Building bonds • Collaboration and cooperation • Team capabilities
Self-Regulation • Self-control • Trustworthiness • Conscientiousness • Adaptability • Achievement • Innovation	**Empathy** • Understanding of others • Developing others • Service orientation • Leveraging diversity • Political awareness
Motivation • Achievement drive • Commitment • Initiative • Optimism	

Emotional intelligence begins on a personal level with self-awareness. This means that a person is able to understand emotions and how they affect others. It includes the competencies of emotional self-awareness, accurate self-assessment and self-confidence. This is the first building block of emotional intelligence, as without self-awareness it is challenging to comprehend other parts of emotional intelligence, like self-regulation. (Mersino 2007, 26-27, 33.)

In more detail, emotional awareness is about feelings. These generally affect humans physically and can be related to heart rate, muscle tightness and feeling hot or cold. Facial expressions play an important role as well. Mersino (2007, 36-37, 44) states that although self-awareness is important, many are not good at ''getting in touch with feelings''. By not being able to understand one's own feelings other aspects of emotional intelligence will be complex to comprehend.

The element of self-assessment in self-awareness requires one to be able to analyse oneself in detail and gathering feedback from others to improve performance. Lastly, self-confidence is an important element in leadership. Self-confident individuals are explained to have presence and believe in oneself. (Mersino 2007, 44-45.)

Self-regulation is about being able to control emotions. Self-regulation (self-management) can happen when the awareness of feelings is used as controlling emotions without understanding feelings is difficult. With self-control and being able to regulate emotions behaviour can be affected. Uncontrolled emotions can be harmful in a working environment and relationships. (Mersino 2007, 52, 54-55.)

Motivation as an element helps to reach goals and is related to the inner desire to really succeed in something, it is also related to a personal level. Empathy is a social competence and an important part of social skills, it is about being able to sense how others may feel without them needing to speak of it separately. Usually these cues come in the form of non-verbal communication. Social skills is about being able to handle the emotions of someone else in a skilful manner it also includes the element of communication and being able to send understandable and assuring messages. (Goleman 2009, 26, 133, 168.)

4.2   Emotional intelligence in communication

Successful communication is the starting point of all social skills. When it comes to leaders these skills separate the average from the highly skilled. The inability to communicate can be very harmful to a working environment. Successful communication requires the ability to control one's own emotions. (Goleman 2009, 207-208.)

Communicating feelings is one of the hardest things when it comes to managing interpersonal relationships. Knowing how to successfully express, interpret and respond to the feelings and non-verbal cues of others is extremely difficult. (Trenholm & Jensen 2013, 72.) Misunderstandings can happen easily in interpersonal communication. These are often caused by emotions and the lack of self-regulation. Therefore, it is important to understand emotional intelligence and master non-verbal communication. For communication to be effective the verbal messages need to be coherent with the non-verbal communication. (Coleman 2010, 47.)

In communication, non-verbality can emphasize or negate what is being verbally communicated. Non-verbal communication acts as a regulatory function and helps to coordinate the dialogue between different individuals. The non-verbal cues tell the other person when it is the correct time to express an opinion, or if the person feels that the conversation is going too far. ''Not everything is said on purpose or is coded in the body

language. Therefore, it forms a large part of the concept of emotional intelligence. ''
(Furnham & Petrova 2010, 4.)

Parts of the emotional competency framework by Goleman can associated with the
communication competence model (CCM) by Trenholm & Jensen (Figure 4). Self-
awareness is about understanding one's internal state, likings, assets and instincts. This
can be connected with the self-competence of the CCM. This is explained below in Figure
5. In emotional intelligence, self-confidence is an element of self-awareness. In the CCM,
self-confidence is linked to self-esteem in self-concept, which is an aspect of self-
competence.
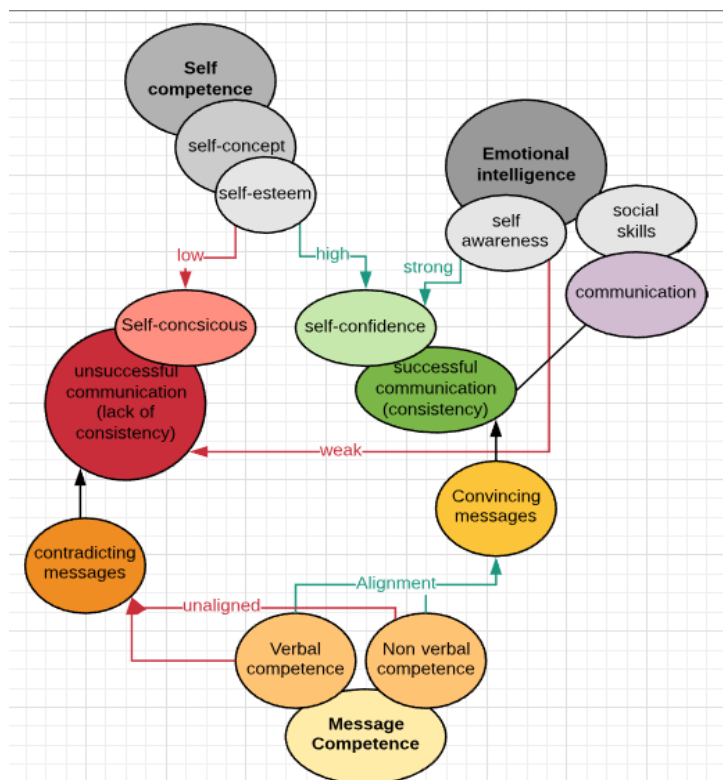
Figure 5 Relationship of self-competence and Emotional intelligence (adapted from
Trenholm & Jensen 2013, 9 and Emotional competency framework by Goleman 2009)

As illustrated in the above image, in communication, inconsistency (in red) can be linked
with the message competence and self-awareness of emotional intelligence. All in all,
communication and being able to send convincing messages is a part of social skills
within emotional intelligence.

4.3 Emotional intelligence at the modern workplace

Goleman (2009, 3) states that ''the rules of work are changing. We're being judged by not just how smart we are, or by our training and expertise, but also how well we handle ourselves and each other''. Furthermore, it is explained how academic abilities are not considered as relevant and having enough intellectual ability and technical knowledge is assumed. Goleman (2009, 41, 116) explains that personal qualities like ''initiative, empathy, adaptability and persuasiveness'' are important. Companies are waking up to the fact that emotional intelligence is becoming more important as the competition is about people (retaining knowledge) rather than products.

Furthermore, Goleman (2009, 298-299) discusses how emotional competence is important in leadership, as leaders need to enable and support effectiveness. Incapability in this will result in a reduced performance levels. This can be avoided by ''instilling enthusiasm and commitment'' and is of great importance when it comes to knowledge workers. ''The organization's collective level of emotional intelligence determines the degree to which the organization's intellectual capital is realized. The art of maximizing intellectual capital lies in orchestrating the interactions of the people who hold the knowledge. When it comes to technical skills and core competencies that make a company competitive the ability to outperform others depends on the relationships of the involved.''

However, when it comes to leaders using and understanding emotions and feelings there is a dilemma. Goleman (2001, 25) refers to a study conducted by psychologist Thomas Achenback from the University of Vermont, USA. Achenback investigated the emotional intelligence in two groups of children between 7-16 years old. The first group was analyzed in the middle of 1970's and the second group at the end of the 1980's. The study concluded that emotional intelligence had reduced steadily.

5   Horses in human use

In the world, there is a limited number of large animals that have been domesticated and are used worldwide. One of these is the horse. The reason why horses were initially used, was because they were large enough to be used for work or to be used as food, but still a manageable size. At the same time as herbivores they do not present a threat to the human, nor are they aggressive animals with the need to defend their territory. In addition to this, horses can be bred in captivity easily. (Greene 2008, 14.)

Horses are herd animals which live in social groups and are accustomed to hierarchy. Horses are willing to form bonds and accept humans as the leader. Horses respond to human commands and are open to human direction. When it comes to working, after being trained they follow routines and patterns even without human supervision. This is one of the reasons why they fit in to the human society well. (Greene 2008, 22.)

5.1   Interaction with equines

Horses are social animals and like many other mammals use facial movements in communication. These can be considered as elements of the animals' behavioral repertoire and are generally referred to as facial expressions. However, when it comes to expressions made by mammals the content of the message has been analyzed to either be an emotional display or inform others what will happen next. (Waller & Micheletta 2013, 54.)

Many species, like cats and dogs, have been studied and it has been found that they are able to recognize the emotional expressions of humans. Horses have also been studied and it has been found that they are able to produce and perceive facial expressions. (Smith, Proops, Grounds, Wathan & McComb 2016, 3.) Wathan (2015, 37) discusses how horses and humans have similar eye responses when it comes to fear. As an example, both species widen their eyes when responding to fear, and when in an aggressive situation both species tighten the eyelids.

Horses are freight animals and they instantly run away from a situation which they feel is dangerous. This is their natural instinct. (Roberts 2002, 223.) When it comes to understanding non-verbal signals the fact that horses are ''flight'' rather than ''fight'' animals means that they will run away if they sense danger. In addition to this, horses are able to recognize intention and authenticity of humans and by that they mirror behavior, which they sense from others. (Roberts 2013, 2001.) Horses give non-judgmental

feedback as they sense and response to a person's intentions, emotions and thoughts, which are subconsciously communicated with body language. (Coaching with horses.)

Monty Roberts (2002, 203) is a world known horse whisperer and has worked with horses for more than fifty years. His parents were in the horse business and trained horses in a 'traditional' and violent way. Obedience was the only option for the horse, as otherwise there was punishment. This lead Roberts to develop a nonviolent method of training based on interaction with horses. The idea is to go towards partnership and willingness through trust and confidence. This is based on communication and as a method relies on body language and understanding.

Roberts (2002, 221) believes that pain can accomplish obedience and compliance, but not outstanding performance. This does not create a sense of achievement and is not a pleasurable experience. He uses the idea of choice when working with horses and that basing anything with ''hurt'' does not apply to any animal or human. Roberts (2002, 233) has seen similarities in human workplaces to the violent way of training horses. The ''concepts of nonviolence, respect and choice are important and can be equally effective in the human arena''. Using partnerships are much more beneficial.

Additionally, Roberts (2013, 22) states how important low adrenaline levels are when working with horses and how important it is to be able to keep the heart beat rate low. As a prey animal, a horse has the tendency to synchronize with the creatures that surrounds it. This means that if a human's adrenaline level or hear beat rate increases, the horse will mirror this and think it should worry about something and potentially run away. Roberts explains how he believes that one of the reasons behind his success is the ability to relax among horses in all situations and to remain in a calm state.

5.2 Animal assisted therapy

Animal assisted therapy uses animals as the fundamental part when it comes to treating a human's psychological and physical problems. The most commonly used animal is the dog, but other smaller animals like rabbits and birds are used as well. When it comes to larger animals, horses are mostly used. The range of problems that can be helped with animals is extensive. Most often, animals are used to help with emotional distress or general stress-related difficulties and are used to treat cognitive functioning, social interaction problems and neurobehavioral conditions like autism. In addition to this, the use of animals has been extended to educational settings for example to improve motivation. (Fine 2010, xv)

Animal assisted therapy has its roots in ancient Egypt, where dogs were used for curative practices and as offerings. It was believed that the licking of a dog had healing effects. Similar use of dogs was taken up by the Greeks. Today, animals are more used to treat mental states or disabilities and not as pharmacologic sources. This has its roots in history. At the end of the 1600s John Locke, an English philosopher and physician, proposed that small companion animals could help with the social development of children, especially when it comes to empathy. Some centuries later, Florence Nightingale implied that alleviating effects on depression could also be seen. During the second world war, a corporal was recovering in a military hospital and his dog was brought to him to lighten his mood. The dog proved to have significant positive antidepressant effects on many injured in the hospital. The Commanding Officer of the Hospital was impressed by this and decided to then regularly take the dog with him to the military hospital rounds to reduce depression. (Fine 2010, xvi.)

As Fine (2010, xvii) explains Sigmund Freud often had his dog at work and in psychotherapy sessions. Initially, the dog was claimed to have relaxing effects on the psychoanalyst and not the patient, but Freud started to notice positive effects in the patients. They were more open and comfortable to talk about difficult issues. Freud found that during a psychoanalysis, when a person is getting towards revealing the problem source, a ''resistance phase'' happens and during this the person may defend oneself from the psychological discomfort and emotions that may arise. This may result in unfriendliness, hiding information or even stop participating in therapy. However, with the dog present this weakened and Freud began to investigate this more closely. He found that while the facial expressions of a therapist can be interpreted as disapproving by the patient, the dog does not react. It remains passive and thus acts reassuring. This gives the patient the feeling of safety and acceptance, and confidence to express any weighing issues.

5.2.1 Equine assisted activities

The use of horses to help with disabilities has been written about for centuries. The early Greeks used horse riding for the untreatable and incurable to cheer them up. In the 18th and 19th century scientific literature of medicine contained multiple remarks on the advantages of using horse riding. In 1875 horse riding was studied from the medical treatment perspective and it was found that riding is beneficial in hemiplegia, paraplegia and other neurological problems. In addition to this, the study concluded that the active and passive movement of the horse helps in posture, balance, movement of the joints and

controlling muscles. The first therapeutic riding programs were set up only in the 1950's. The idea of using horses for physical therapeutic purposes was developed by two females, Liz Hartel and Elsbet Bodker, in Norway. Hartel had gotten infected with polio and loss the ability to walk. Despite of this she won a silver medal in the Helsinki Olympics in dressage. This sparked the interest of the medical field and Bodker was encouraged by a physicist to conduct therapeutic riding for the physically weak and disordered. (DePauw, 1986, 217-2018.)

As animals, horses make their decisions based on the stimuli they receive from others or their environment. They are able ''to perceive, react to and learn from the impressions they receive from minimal sensory stimuli''. This may come from human biochemistry, non-verbal communication like body language and vocal intonations. Each horse has its own personality, tendencies, preferences and dislikes and have their individual personalities. (PATH.) However, they are non-judgmental, have no prejudices and are highly effective at mirroring attitudes and behaviors of humans. They are compassionate and caring by nature. As domesticated prey animals horses are very sensitive to human emotional state changes, which also affects human physiology. (Suomenhevosliitto 2016.)

If a person arrives anxious the horse will act and respond in a specific way. If the person can reduce the level of anxiety, the horse's behavior will change. A depressed person may experience equine therapy as an experience that helps to build up confidence as one can control a large animal. When treating disabilities, the natural movement and warmth of the horse affects the human balance and motion senses, which can help relaxation. (Suomenhevosliitto, 2016.)

Generally, horses have been used for children with disability to support growth and development. Horses have been utilized for many years in physical and mental therapy for humans. Equine Therapy is based on interactions between patients and horses. It can include different activities like touching, brushing, walking, riding and feeding the horse, which generally happen under the supervision of a mental health and horse professional. This is more specifically referred to equine assisted therapy. (Suomenhevosliitto, 2016.)

Horse riding can have several physical effects when used therapeutically (therapeutic riding). In addition to this, when horses are acting as the medium it can have educational benefits. It is discussed that the persons interest and motivation to learn are stimulated. Therapeutic riding is also claimed to have effects on self-awareness, self-confidence and self-esteem. Several studies on horse riding were conducted in 1980's. They concluded that horse riding had positive medical and educational effects on people with disabilities.

Medically, these being physiological, and educationally these being in communication, social behavior, emotional release, self-esteem, self-awareness and physical functioning. (DePauw, 1986, 220-222.)

Stock and Kolb discuss (2016, 43) that using horses to help humans has been documented in other fields. In psychotherapy traumatized patients have benefitted from horses by experiencing a connection to the animal, reduced amounts of unpleasant feelings and increased levels in general well-being. In addition to this, horses have helped to refine communication skills, develop compassion and train presence.

5.3   Experiental learning theory

As Isotalus and Rajalahti (2017, 69) discuss leadership interaction skills can be developed. This is a continuous process that happens throughout the working life and from obtaining experiences. Development becomes more efficient if one is able train communication in practice and receive feedback. In addition to this, Goleman (2009, 278) believes that all emotional intelligence skills can be developed. The important factor is to receive feedback when an emotional state is misunderstood. Even a small amount of immediate feedback can have a great effect on the emphatic accuracy.

Additionally, it is discussed how the emotional part of the brain learns differently from the thinking brain. The emotional part of the brain is the location where the personal management and social adeptness skills are stored. Many trainings have mistakenly used an academic model when it comes to training people in ''listening and leadership to team building and handling change''. A classroom setting is appropriate for intellectual skill development, but learning behavior related matters requires engaging emotional circuitry, which stores habits related to sociality and emotions. Hence, as this development is about changing habits it requires a different learning approach. (Goleman, 2009, 6, 244.)

Experiential learning is learning from experiences and is different from the traditional classroom experience. By using equines in leadership training individuals are able to gather experiences from interactions with horses and immediately receive feedback on the interaction. Next, the behavior can be modified accordingly and practiced in different encounters with the animal. The learning is a process in which concepts are obtained from and continuously modified by experience. (Kolb 1984, 26.) This process happens in four stages and they are explained in Figure 6.
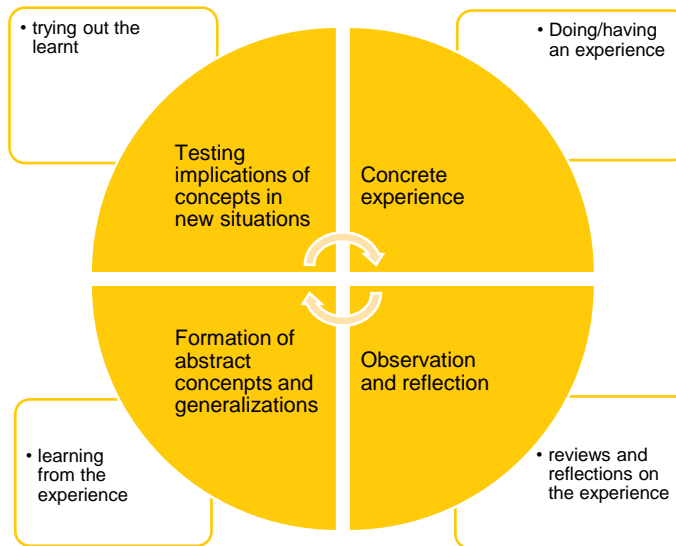
Figure 6 The Lewinian Experiental Learning Model (adapted from Kolb 1984, 21)

The first step is about having and encountering an experience. Second, the experience is observed and reflected on to gather understanding. Third, by reflection and observation new ideas arise and behavior can be modified. Lastly, the newly learnt matter is implemented and used in different situations.

Based on the Lewinian Model there are two aspects why this learning model is meaningful

- There is an immediate personal experience, which is the focal point for learning, giving life, texture, and subjective personal meaning to an abstract concept. At the same time there is a concrete point is tested during the learning process.
- Information feedback provides the basis for a continuous process of goal directed action and evaluation of the consequences of that action. Much individual and organizational ineffectiveness can be traced ultimately to a lack of adequate feedback process. This ineffectiveness results from an imbalance between observation and action.
(Kolb, 1984 21-22.)

5.4 Equine assisted learning

Equine assisted learning is an experiential method, in which participants interact with the horse in the animal's environment. The methods used can include riding or working with the animal from the ground. This learning approach is aimed at looking into personal feelings and behaviors, with the goal to grow and develop life skills. The professional assisting the participants does not need to be a mental health professional as psychotherapy is not the intention. The idea is to help personal growth, more specifically with self-improvement, self-awareness and social interaction. (Fine 2015, 117, 129.)

Not all horses can be used in equine assisted learning. Often the horses in the sessions are older and have more experience. The horses need to tolerate different humans

around them during short periods of time and be used to different noises and human behaviors. Also, they are generally calmer by nature. (Fine 2015, 116.)

5.4.1 Using horses in leadership interaction development

Using equines in leadership development is a growing field and is used especially for communication and teamwork development in the United States, United Kingdom, Germany, Switzerland, South Africa and Australia. So far, the results from equine-assisted- experimental learning have been seen in self-perception and ability to work with others. Also, as stated by Stock and Kolb the external location of the stables and the environment that comes with it, enables participants to focus and fully engage in the experience. (Stock & Kolb 2016, 46)

Working with horses provides a provocative experience and the secondary product of this experience is the development of oneself (Kelly 2014, 219.) The aim of the training is to help the participants to get to know themselves and understand how great of an effect their behavior and emotions can have on communication, and how an outsider sees and understands the communication. This is done with a series of different kind of exercises with the horse, from the ground and by trying horse riding. (Kosonen 2013, 34.)

Horses are dependent on instinct and intuition and read non-verbal cues based on which they respond. Communication with horses requires patience, consistency, attention and understanding. Like humans, horses react to moods and have moods of their own. Non-verbal communication with a horse helps people to better understand themselves and how they are seen by others. Leaders, and humans in general, don't necessarily always understand what they are communicating with their body. This may be something very different to what is actually being said. (Kosonen 2015, 33.)

The fact that horses respond to human behavioral patterns provides honest and clear feedback. Interaction situations with horses provide learning opportunities with immediate direct feedback. (Spirit of Leadership.) In practice, when working with horses the learnee is able to see the reaction that happens due to non-verbal communication. In the coaching this communication problem is practiced using experiences with horses, with the aim to correct the body language and send successful messages. (Kosonen 2015, 33.)

Psychotherapist Maikku and horse trainer Korhonen, whom have one of the few equine leadership development services in Finland, explain that in a training situation a horse can bring up the development areas in a human. A horse is a large animal, and there are

many people that have little or no experience with dealing with such a large animal. In a leadership position, leaders inevitably end up in situations that are uncomfortable and require complex decision making in uncertain situations, this can be frightening. Working with horses can bring out the same frightening reaction but it gives the possibility to explore what reactions are happening inside and how these reactions can be managed. Humans often try to hide their emotions and feelings of anxiety and fear. This also causes the body language to change. In a human-to-human situation the frightened person may be able to hide the true emotions, but a horse will find this to be uncomfortable and react in an unwanted way. When a human relaxes, and admits fear, the horse can be calm again. This reaction encourages towards authenticity and being vulnerable and humane. (Koskinen, 2017.)

6 Conducting the research

This chapter presents how the research and study was conducted. This begins with explaining the constructive research methodology. Next the data gathering methods and analyses is explained. Lastly, the validity and reliability of the study is discussed.

6.1 Summary of theories

Based on the literature the author identified the key competence areas, which should be addressed in leadership levelopment. It became evident that in today's working life the most important skills that leaders should have are related to social skills. This was confirmed by Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer (2009, 13) who stated that leader's duty is to support the employees work abilities and that they need to enable creativity and collaboration within a team, which requires interaction skills. Also, Isotalus and Rajalahti (2017, 14) explained how interaction is behaviour based and that the interaction skills of a leader can have a huge effect on employees. However, it seems that many leaders rise from a position that requires efficiency and is based on hard skills (Työelämä 2020 2018, 12).

It became clear that interaction is highly dependent on what is communicated verbally and non-verbally, but it is non-verbality that generally initiates interaction and can play a more important role (Isotalus and Rajalahti (2017, 19). Furthermore, the complexity behind non-verbal communication lies in the fact that it communicates the emotional state, which makes it challenging to many (Trenholm and Jensen 2013, 72). Succeeding in this requires emotional intelligence and understanding what the sender and receiver are communicating non-verbally (Matthews et al 2002, 4).

As the importance of interaction skills in leadership was discussed in several parts of the literature, but it seems like there is a gap on what is needed by employees and what skills leaders possess the training need is directed towards improving the interaction skills of leaders. To narrow down the training topics the author followed the idea from Mersino (2007, 36-37), who discussed that emotions (feelings) affect humans physically. Also, as pointed out by Greene and Burleson (2003, 179), non-verbality is seen percentually as more important, but in practice undermined. Due to this the author saw the need to focus the development of leaders towards non-verbal communication and base the training on this.

Furthermore, Isotalus and Rajalahti (2017, 27) state that interaction skills can be learnt and developed, but this requires amending behavior. Also, they give the initial suggestion that interaction skills can be improved from obtaining experiences, but a more certain way is to participate in a communication training. Based on this the author saw the need to develop a training that support this. The training methods would be based on the experiential learning theory. However, as explained by Steelman and Rutkowski (2004, 8, 13) humans may have hidden agendas or political biases (Kolb 2015, intro) when giving feedback, which can make it dishonest and hard to accept by the receiver. Due to this, the author is looking at the possibility of implementing equine assisted activities in the leadership interaction development training.

The experiential learning theory has been adapted to suit the equine assisted training and learning experience as shown in the below Figure.
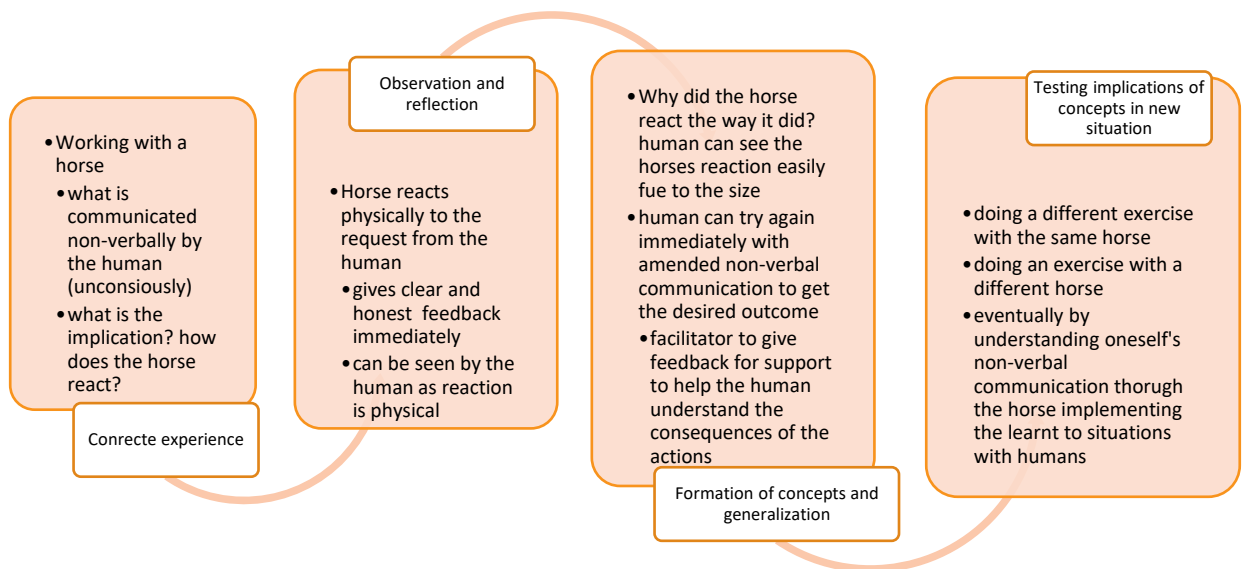
Figure 7 Learning process with horses (adapted from Kolb 1984, 21)

All in all, the author is looking to create a training that supports the current development needs of leaders, takes into consideration the behavioral aspect of interaction, and offers a positive and acceptable way of receiving feedback.

6.2   Constructive research methodology and process

This study used the constructive research methodology. The aim is to solve a problem by producing a solution that can be implemented in leadership development trainings. The problem and elements of the suggested solution have been examined in the theoretical framework discussed in this thesis. The solution is demonstrated in the following chapter.

(Kasanen, Lukka & Siitonen 1993, 244, 246.) The constructive research approach also used action research elements as the aim is to create change in behaviour. This is used in the pilot group training phase.

Constructive research can be divided into several process steps. The order may vary depending on the case, but the steps for this study can be found below in Figure 7 in the left column. The column ''what'' explains what the process step aims at. The column ''where'' describes the methods that has been used to collect data and information. The final column ''result'' represents what the outcome of the process step is.

Process step	What?	Where?	Result
1. Finding the problem	Topicality of leadership interaction at the modern workplace	Background research (articles) & personal observations from life and workplace	Initial thoughts on the problem
2. Understanding of the problem	Finding out what is the reason behind the problem	Literature, personal observations, initial HR interview, questionnaire on perceptions	Ideas for problem solving
3. Constructing the innovative solution	Use equines to develop leaders interaction skills to suit the modern workplace	Benchmark, Pre-pilot training questionnaire	To validate the solution a pilot group training will be held to test the practicality
4. Examine the scope of applicability	Findings of the pilot group	Observations from Pilot, Q3, Q4, HR interview 2	To find successfulness of the training, how it could be improved,

Figure 8 Constructive approach process (adapted from Kasanen et al 1993)

As shown in Figure 7 the first step of the study was to find a relevant and existing problem that has potential for further research. The starting point to came with newspaper articles as described in chapter 1.2. Furthermore, the authors author's own experiences in personal and working life were combined with the articles to find a research topic of interest and trigger initial thoughts on the problem. (Kasanen et al 1993, 246).

Second, to gather further and deeper understanding on the assumed problem the author searched for relevant theoretical literature. This was done to gather support on the initial thoughts and whether they seem valid on a theoretical level. (Kasanen et al 1993, 246.) Furthermore, as the problem seemed to be relevant in working life the author interviewed

an HR consultant with more than 25 years of consultancy experience to get further insights on the topic and if there is room for leadership interaction development.

Third, with the help of the information gathered from the first two steps the author began to construct an innovative solution to develop leadership interaction skills. To demonstrate the possibility of using the constructed solution, the designed Pilot Training was tested in practice. Lastly, the Pilot Training was analyzed to examine the successfulness and effectiveness of the training and to find improvement points for possible future trainings using a similar concept. (Kasanen et al 1993, 246.)

6.3 Data collection and analysis

The data collection for this thesis is done using qualitative methods. This suits the study as the aim is to ''explore and understand the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem'' (Creswell 2014, 32). The objective of data collection is to help describe, understand and interpret phenomena and to answer questions such as what the problem is, why is it happening and how could it be fixed.

The data has been collected from several sources and using different methods as seen below in Figure 8. The data collection is used to understand the current situation and the question of what, why and how can be answered by more than one method. When it comes to timing, the collection happened once most of the theory had been explored. However, based on the data collection findings the author searched for more theory if necessary. The below image aims to show that the data was collected in three main stages.
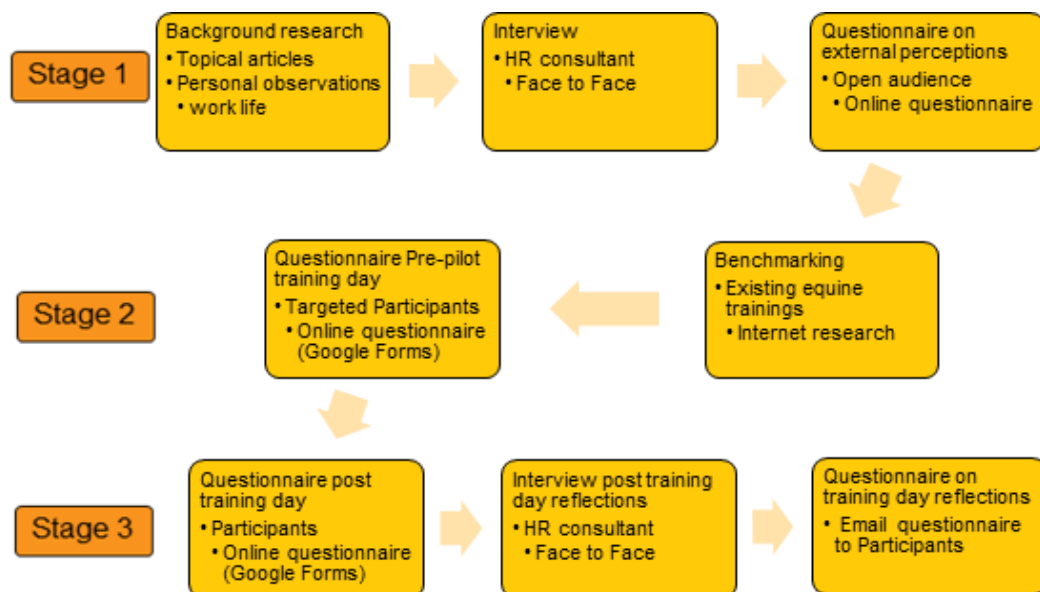
Figure 9 Data collection methods and stages

The first stage was to gather data on mostly what the problem is and why it is happening. The second stage was aimed at developing a solution and gathering supportive information for the construct and how the problem could be fixed. The last stage aims at gathering feedback from the pilot training and support answering the question of how the problem could be fixed and if the conducted pilot training seems valid.

From the collected data thematic analysis were made. This was done to find arising and interesting patterns, which can be used when determining the deeper issue and finding a solution. In order to identify the themes the author followed the steps indicated in the below figure flexibly. (Maguire & Delahunt 2017, 3352-3353).
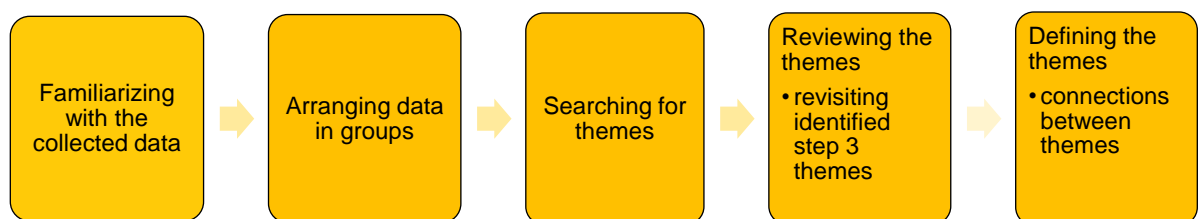
Figure 10 Thematic analysis process (adapted from Maguire & Delahunt 2017)

The below chapters explain the data collection and analysis in more details. The post-training day questionnaire, HR consultant post training day interview and participant reflection questionnaire analysis can be seen in Chapter 7 as they reflect to the conducted pilot training and its results.

6.3.1 Background research

The initial mapping of the thesis began with the author observing and familiarizing with topical news and articles which connected horses, leadership and emotional intelligence. The articles were as follows (with a freeform English translation):

- Hevosia harrastavista tytöistä tulee aikuisena keskimääräistä parempia johtajia [Girls with horse related hobbies become better than average leaders when adults] (Kauppalehti, 2015)
- Hevostytöistä kasvaa johtajia [Horse girls grow up to become leaders] (Hämeen Sanomat, 2002)
- Mitä esimiehet voivat oppia hevosilta? – ''Ole aito, läsnä ja myötätuntoinen'' [What can leaders learn from horses? – ''Be real, present and compassionate''] (Koskinen, 2017)
- Hevonen voi auttaa oppimaan esimerkiksi sosiaalista vuorovaikutusta [A horse can help with learning social interaction] (Kontiainen, 2016)
- Insinöörejä ei pidä johtaa hierakisesti vaan tunneälyllä [Engineers should not be led hierarchially but with emotional intelligence] (Mustonen, 2010)

- Johtaja, tunneäly ei riitä, tarvitaan tunnekyvykkyyttä [Leader, emotional intelligence is not enough, emotional abilites are needed] (Seies, 2017)

To take this further the author began to search for more in-depth information on the matter discussed in the articles and how theory can be connected.

In addition to this, the author made observations at the current workplace to analyse workplace interactions and their relation to topical news and articles. Based on these the research problem was developed, as the author noticed some leadership behaviour that was affecting a group of individuals. In addition to this, from the perspective of a communications student the behaviour did not seem appropriate and required further investigation.

6.3.1.1 Background research analysis

The author first familiarized with the articles and then started the process of analyzing the contents and defining the main themes as seen in Appendix 1. The article themes were grouped as suggested by Maguire and Delahunt (2017, 3355).

The first article *''Girls with horse related hobbies become better than average leaders when adults''* had a very strong in relation to the content of the article. This headline statement was based on a study conducted in Uppsala, and in the article referred to the question ''does horse riding interest women more?''. However, the article itself discussed the Helsinki International Horse Show and as a headline was therefore slightly misleading and did not provide much thematical value but woke up some thoughts on the matter that the author wanted to investigate more.

The second *article ''Horse girls grow up to become leaders''* was follow up research to the first article. This article referred to a Swedish study, which can be assumed to be the same one as in the first article. The article explained that the social environment with friends and adults, and learning the skills to control a large animal teaches leadership. The rest of the article was more about explaining a certain riding school and how they are teaching skills to work with horses. The elements of leadership skills developed with horses and the social aspect seemed to be the overarching themes for this article.

The third article *''What can leaders learn from horses?''* was based on an interview of a psychotherapist and horse coach and how they have noticed that horse skills and life skills go hand in hand. They are one of the few who have a horse related development business in Finland. This article had a more thorough perspective to the psychological

effects and how horses can actually teach skills like compassion, presence and authenticity. They also referred to the aspect of non-verbal communication and how horses are honest communicators. In addition to this, the article discussed leadership being about caring towards others. When it comes to finding connecting themes this article had the most correlations to thematical findings with the other articles. This article pointed out details on using horses for human training, which were looked into in more detail as the base for the pilot training.

Based on the article of the previous paragraph the author came across the fourth article ''A horse can help with learning social interaction'' which connected horses to social pedagogical activities for the disabled. This article explained how all the activities done at the stables are used for rehabilitating and preventing purposes. In addition to this it was explained that social pedagogical horse activities have four basic principles: communality, functionality, experience and dialogue. Furthermore, the article described how disabled at times have difficulties when it comes to communication, but this can be practiced with the use of horses. In all the activities, the idea is that the person gets feelings of success and self-confidence from working with such large animals. When it comes to themes this article also had multiple correlations to other articles, although its starting point was different as it discussed treating disability in a clearly pedagogical manner and how horses are used as tools for treatment. This article strengthened the idea on what theory should be investigated and how horses in training purposes work on some level.

At work, the author had noted considerable tension in a group of leaders where the communication was low quality. In addition to this, communication skills on an individual level required some attention and showed room for improvement. Lack of respect, openness and not understanding how non-verbal communication affect others was evident.

This could be seen with the initial body language of the individuals before the actual start of the meeting and how facial expressions showed negativity and uninterest, together with folded arms and a slumped posture. This does not only create an atmosphere of negativity that affects others around, but also affects the credibility of the person in question. This led the author to concentrate more on leadership behaviour and if similar problems can be spotted.

The author came across article five ''Engineers should not be led hierarchically but with emotional intelligence'' and article 6 ''Leader, emotional intelligence is not enough, emotional abilities are needed''. These were interesting due to the topicality for the author

due to working with engineers. As the author read these articles it started to become more apparent that leaders need to evolve as knowledge workers (engineers) are evolving. This lead to understanding the importance of interaction and emotional intelligence skills of leaders and finding the dissertation by Pirjo Kolari who was worried that when organizations should be using emotional intelligence more the opposite is happening in some sectors. The other article mentioned in this paragraph discussed the ability to be able to control emotions and how it is important for leaders and that it can be learnt by practicing. These articles had similar thematic findings and a strong connection to emotional intelligence in particular.

All in all, most the articles had themes that could be connected with each other. The majority of the themes were linked to leadership skills, indicating the importance of sociality and emotional intelligence. The social aspect was a theme coming up from the perspective of the engineers, but could also be connected to the horse related articles. The same applies to emotional intelligence in all but the two first articles, which were rather focusing on the hobby aspect despite the strong and interesting headline. More specifically, when it comes to emotional intelligence in particular feelings were pointed out in half of the articles.

6.3.2 Initial HR consultant interview

After personal observations the author interviewed an external HR consultant. The interview was conducted to gather more background information on the topic.The interview questions can be found in Appendix 2. This was conducted in an open manner in June 2018. The author used qualitative questions in an unstructured face-to-face interview with the external consultant to obtain as non-biased opinions and views as possibleThe interview aimed at a thematic analysis and finding matters that are interesting to this study and can provide further information. (Maguire & Delahunt 207, 3352.)

6.3.2.1 Interview analysis

The interview with the external HR consultant began with important leadership skills. The consultant stated the importance of interaction skills, positivity and being easily approachable. A leader needs to genuinely be present and to want good things. Being interested in people is crucial. The consultant commented that from her perspective managers are appointed based on business success factors, which means that there is a possibility of not having sufficient interaction skills.

The discussion carried on to leadership in the modern working environment. The consultant stated that she sees managers often being chosen based on how successful they are in their work, which may mean a lack of people skills. This is not really a good thing, as in leadership one needs to be able to understand and accept others. Special experts (like IT specialists) are not necessarily good in this as it is not easy for them to look at things from another person's shoes, as they have spent a lot of their time working with hard skills where the need for human interaction is limited.

Next, the importance on interaction skills in particular were discussed. The consultant felt that these are crucial in leadership is due to the fact this is the only way how to communicate to others and to get them complete the required tasks.

The interview continued on to discussing how leaders could be helped to improve in interacting. The consultant said that when it comes to developing interaction, practicing and feedback is needed. Different exercises and situations should be used. ''Everyone learns in his or her own way, but in general the best is do things in practice''. The author commented that there are usually trainings to practice communication at the workplace. The consultant felt that as a setting this may be challenging as at the workplace as one tends to play a certain role and there may be interruptions.

At the end the discussion the author suggested to try something else to offering a traditional training at the workplace and considering including animals, horses, to the training. The consultant felt that this would be a different method and something that she has not seen before during her career. She commented that as horse therapy is good for children and it calms down, so ''why would it not be efficient for leaders?'' In addition to this, as an environment it would be very unusual and could be a good experience. The consultant was aware herself that horses have healing and therapeutic effects and this was not discussed.

6.3.3 Questionnaire on external perceptions

After the discussion with the external consultant the author initiated further data collection using a google form questionnaire, which investigated the personal feelings externals (an open audience) have on interaction, communication and leadership. This questionnaire was used to gather even further information on the background of the topic and the complexities that may arise. The questionnaire was shared openly in the author's social media to gather as many opinions and thoughts as possible and not to limit the replies to just one organization. The author wanted to see if any similarities can be found among the

respondents and the authors own understanding on the topic. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 3.

The questionnaire included open ended questions and some questions using the Likert scale. Likert scale was chosen as the data can be easily interpreted and it suited the need to gather information on the respondent's psychological construct. Furthermore, this suited the need to gather data on how respondents feel from one extreme compared to another. (Nemoto & Beglar 2014, 1-2.) The scale ranged from 1 (indicating a low and unsatisfied opinion) to 5 (indicating a high and satisfied opinion).

The goal was to understand respondent beliefs on interaction and communication. In addition to this the objective was to find out how they feel about the current situation of leadership in relation to interaction and if they feel like there would be a need for development in this area. The link to this questionnaire was shared openly in social media and hence was not limited to any company in specific. The questionnaire was made using Google Forms, which allowed participants to answer anonymously. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 2.

6.3.3.1 Questionnaire analysis

The questionnaire had 17 respondents. The responses that described successful interaction were put in groups based on thematic analysis, as shown below in Figure 11. In general, the responses implied several matters that were related to feelings, like being able to handle many feelings, parties being able to feel heard or understood and feeling comfortable.
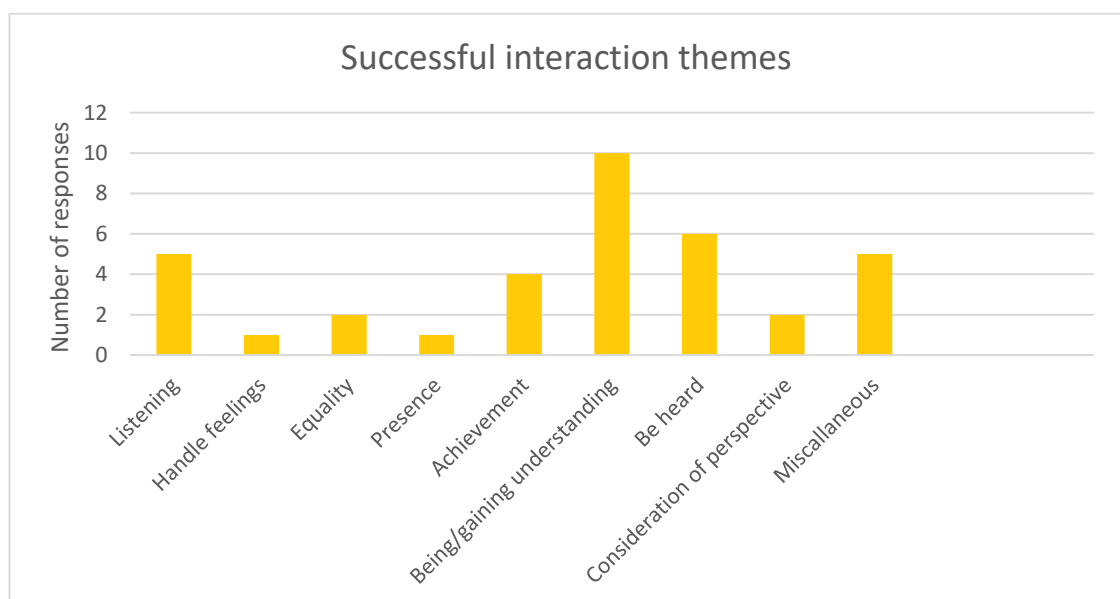

Figure 11 External perceptions questionnaire responses on the interaction theme

The most common theme was related to understanding and being heard. Listening was also considered as highly important. The miscellaneous replies were describing different feelings relating to interaction, these being content, positivity or comfortability.

When it came to rating the current lead's interaction skills on a scale of 1 (very bad) to 5 (excellent) none of the respondents felt that they were excellent (Grade 5). Both grade 4 and 3 received six replies. Scores 1 and 2 received altogether 5 replies.

The responses that were given to describe essential skills for effective communication were grouped as shown in Figure 11 below. The most common theme was related to listening, but when it came to feelings specifically empathy was pointed out several times. Also, the importance of using or understanding physical (non-verbal) signals was commented on multiple times. Clarity in communication was also highlighted.
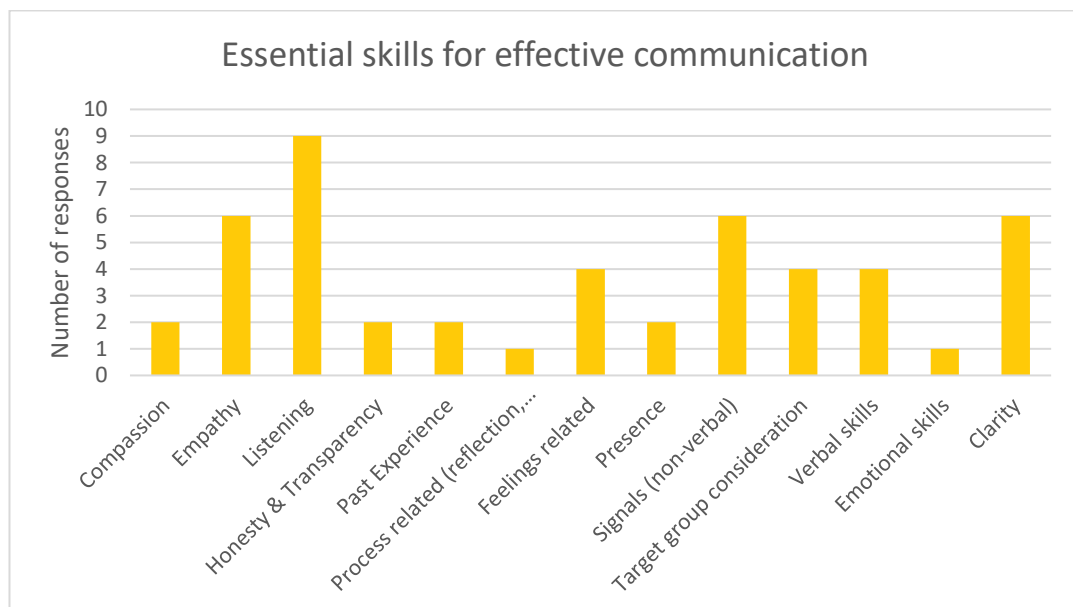
Figure 12 External perceptions questionnaire responses for essential communication skills

As shown in Figure 13 below, the most important skills considered for a leader were moving around several different ideas. However, being transparent and understanding employees came up in several answers. Many of the respondents pointed out that from their perspective a leader should be a mentor or coach and not overly controlling. Motivation was also discussed. From the perspective of feelings empathy received the most acknowledgement.

Figure 13 External perceptions questionnaire responses for most important leader skills

The majority of the respondents felt that both verbal and non-verbal communication is important. Two respondents felt that verbal communication is more important. In the open comments, ideas on delivering verbal and non-verbal communication simultaneously and their reinforcing abilities and affects were shared.

All the respondents felt that emotional intelligence is important in leadership. One respondent commented that by being a leader who is aggressive/bad at harmonious communication can get much done, but by being thoughtful and reasonable towards the employees one will be able to retain employees for longer and eliminate stress. This respondent felt that not everyone is capable of this.

Other comments were that this is very important, and that emotional intelligence in leadership affects work motivation, and can have effects on employees' careers. In addition to this, being able to control and understand feelings at the workplace is seen important to avoid conflicts and miscommunication.

On the sale of 1 (not emotionally intelligent at all) to 5 (very emotionally intelligent) leaders were evaluated for being emotionally intelligent. Over half of the respondents scored their leader as weak. Three scored their leader on the average scale of three and seven respondents gave the score of four. None rated their leader to be very emotionally intelligent.

In the open comments for emotional intelligence one respondent commented that this is a skill in business that more people should have and speculated that this could be the reason behind the boom of digital creative industries. One felt that emotional intelligence is a skill that is built before entering the working life and can be difficult to train.

When it came to methods of learning a little over a half favoured ''learning based on personal experiences'' and ''trainings held outside the office with a professional trainer''. The least support was given to online trainings.

Lastly, on a scale of 1 (not necessary) to 5 (absolutely), over half of the respondents felt that leaders should receive more training on soft skills. A clear majority answered absolutely, four respondents scored four and two scored three. No responses were given to scores 1 or 2.

6.3.4 Benchmarking

The main objective of benchmarking was to find more information and answers to the research question ''How can leadership interaction be developed with the use of equines?''. This was done by finding out how existing companies are executing leadership development programs in practice, what kind of development areas they are claiming to support and whether there is a valid connection to the theory explored in this thesis. More specifically, the author was searching for themes that relate to the following theories, which have been explored in the literature of this thesis:

1. Communication competence model (Chapter 3.1)
2. Hierarchical model of management competencies (Chapter 2.2)
3. Emotional intelligence framework (Chapter 4.1)

The author searched online for equine assisted leadership development programs both in English and in Finnish. Finland was searched to see if there are existing businesses offering these services in Finland. However, the search was extended to be global, as the hits with Finnish language ended up producing very limited search hits. The following search words were used:

- Equine leadership training
- Leadership training with horses/equines
- Leadership development with horses
- Johtajuus ja hevoset
- Esimieskoulutus hevosilla

The list of the final companies that were found, their geographical locations and website addresses can be found in Appendix 5.

Bechmarking analysis began after the author had interpreted the content of the websites After this the thematic analysis method was used to identify similar patterns within the contents, which are interesting to this study and may provide further information to the

issue (Maguire & Delahunt 207, 3352). More specifically, the author wanted to find out which elements of the theories receive the most thematical hits on the website.

The main thematical findings were placed in a table based on finding website content correlations to the three main theoretical models (communication competence model, hierarchical model of management competencies and the emotional intelligence framework). This table made by the author for the purpose of conducting the graphical analysis can be seen in Appendix 6.

The values in the graphical analysis in the next chapter are based on if the author has been able to connect the statements and the themes discussed in the content of the website to the three main theories. This means there is no standard maximum value.

6.3.4.1   Benchmarking analysis

When investigating opportunities for leadership training with equines in Finland during benchmarking the search hits were very low and it can be determined that using horses in leadership development is very limited in Finland. However, when searching the internet and looking at different countries, it came clear that in the USA and UK horses are constantly used in various leadership development programs. In the end eight of the companies listed in Appendix 5 were used in more detail to investigate statements and introductory texts to the service concepts they offer more thoroughly. Not all the companies could be used for due to some technical issues, i.e. affected malware on the website.

Each of the three theories mentioned were looked at more specifically. The author investigated most of the companies seen Appendix 5 that offer services for leadership development with equines. The findings have been grouped per theory and the attributes discussed in each theory as per Appendix 6.

When it comes to reflecting the websites to the communication competence model the clearest the themes are most around the concepts self-competence, role-competence and message competence as shown below in Figure 14.
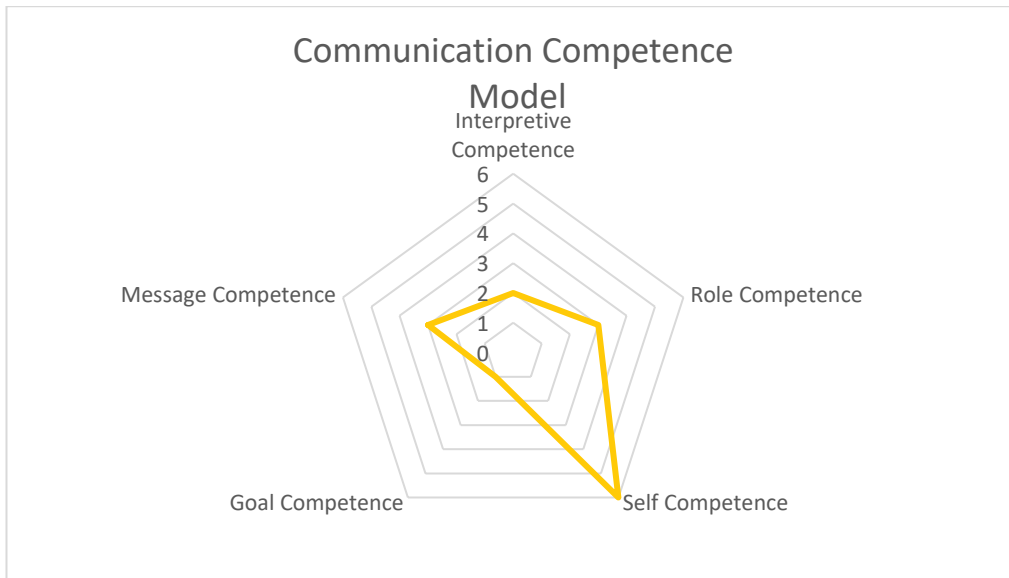
Figure 14 Equine training reflecting to communication competence model

In regards to message competence especially non-verbal communication and body language were mentioned in several websites. Elements of self-competence were indicated many times and the importance of authenticity, confidence and consistency in communication was discussed in multiple websites.

When it comes to the hierarchy of management the competencies that can be developed with equines fall to the bottom of the pyramid, where the harder development areas like personal traits and growth as a human are located. As shown in Figure 15 below, out of the six websites five had a clear correlation to social competency and four to intrapersonal competency. In three of the websites the author felt that the statements made were relating to both social and intrapersonal competency.
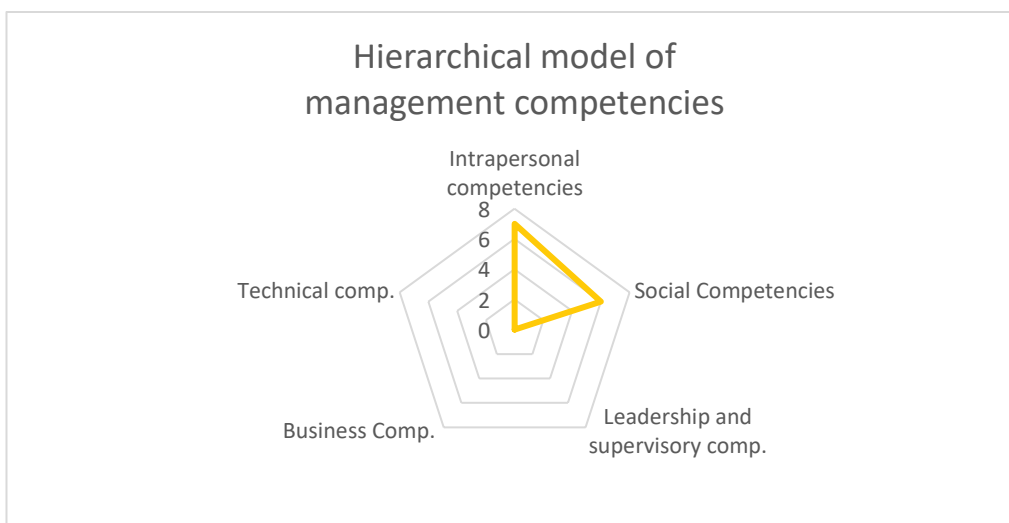
Figure 15 Equine training reflecting to Hierarchical model of management competencies

More specifically, self-confidence and conflict resolution as skills were discussed, which are both capabilities of intrapersonal competence. In addition to this being able to manage emotions was discussed often, together with being present. Being present can be connected to being focused, and these are some of the core components when it comes to intrapersonal competencies.

Benchmarking also indicated that social skills and more specifically communication has received more attention and remarks on development than other elements of emotional intelligence in existing equine trainings.

Regarding social competences, almost all websites mentioned communication. More specifically, the importance of non-verbal communication and being consistent was mentioned. The importance of aligning messages with intent was pointed out as significant. In addition to this in one of the websites working with horses had more in depth insight to handling conflicts, which plays an important part in maintaining relationships, this part also overlaps with the intrapersonal competences.

The areas that can be developed with horses is the most versatile in emotional intelligence. The emotional intelligence framework in Table 2 has several emotional skills that could be found from the contents and claims from investigating websites of the companies offering leadership development with the use of horses.

One website mentioned similar findings as in the interview analysis, and that there are individuals being appointed to a leadership position based on strong technical abilities but may lack skills when it comes to leading others. This website claims that this can be developed with the help of horses.

Based on the grouping it can be seen below in Figure 16 that the clearest and most common discussions and claims were seen in self-awareness as many websites discussed the ability to develop confidence and understanding of one's emotions. Many websites claimed that by interacting with a horse confidence can be built by working with such a large animal.
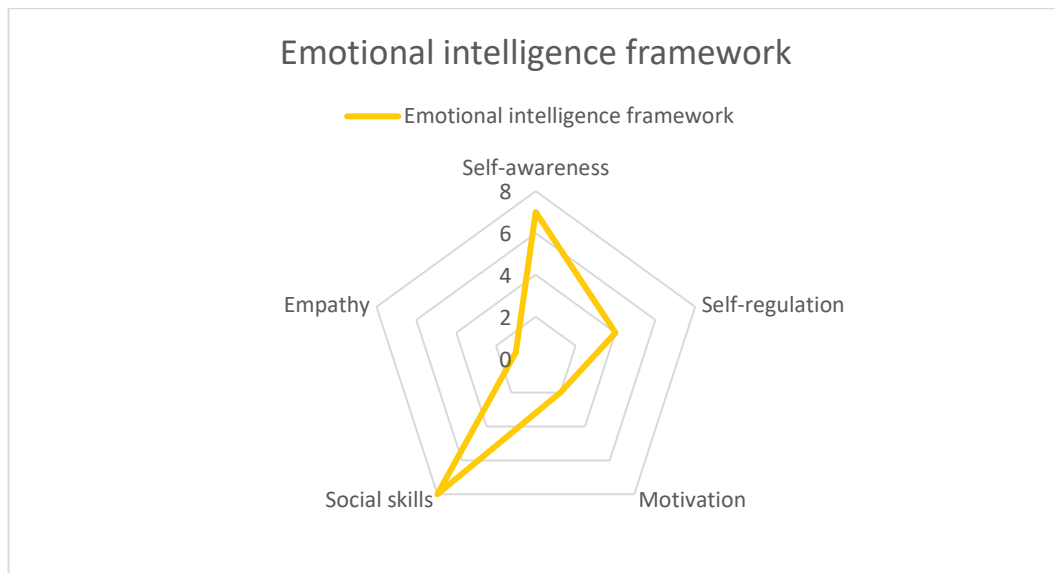
Figure 16 Equine training reflecting to Emotional Intelligence Framework

Social skills received high marks as communication skills, team work, conflict management and leadership were discussed, which are elements of this skill. When it comes to communication multiple websites discuss on how one's own behaviour can influence others around and what is being communicated effectively. This behaviour can be the result of emotions or lack of understanding the importance of non-verbal communication. The websites explain that due to the horse's ability to sense and react to emotions and energy levels the element of emotional-awareness can be developed. Furthermore, when it comes to non-verbal communication working with horses forces one to stop and interpret what is being communicated non-verbally and what feelings and intentions are behind the communication. Communication can also be reflected to the social competence of social skills as noted in the emotional competency framework (Table 2) in Chapter 4.1.

Motivation, being optimistic, and self-regulation, being able to control one's emotions, received some attention. Interestingly clear connections to empathy were not visible.

All in all, many websites discuss understanding oneself on a deeper level. One states that there is often a difference on what is known to be successful and how it is used in practice. The main benefit from working with horses was moving around the horse's ability to give honest feedback and for giving this immediately without doubt based on the true feelings of the human. These can be reflected through body language and as horses communicate mostly non-verbally they are very sensitive to non-verbal cues. Furthermore, when it comes to claiming the successfulness behind the training some explain how participating in a horse driven leadership training the experience may be more enjoyable

then the traditional training setting. The main theme was around learning from an experience and engaging senses.

These analysis from this chapter have taken into consideration of the pilot training construction as described in Chapter 7.

6.3.5   Pre-pilot training day questionnaire

The questionnaire before the pilot training day was sent to the pilot group participants to map out background information for the actual event and find out a little more information on the participants and their expectations. In addition to this it was aimed to find out if they are at all familiar with the theoretical concept of emotional intelligence and how they feel like they are handling their emotions at work. While this questionnaire was conducted the author was at the same time finalizing benchmarking. The questionnaire can be found in Appendix 4.

6.3.6   Questionnaire analysis

The questionnaire conducted a brief surface level individual assessment to analyze what needs improving. The results indicated that the participants had very short leadership experience, which reinforced the need to provide training for them. Furthermore, the responses received were very surface level and hence deep analysis cannot be formed. From the replies it could be seen that the most experience in a leadership position was around one year, but for the rest a maximum of five months, which is a very short duration.

When it came to stating what type of leadership is appreciated the following points came up, which indicate the importance of communication and fostering an open communication culture:

> ''I appreciate when a lead is able to communicate clearly his expectations for me and the team and provides constructive feedback''
>
> ''creating an atmosphere where you are not afraid to ask for help or to spar on ideas''

When it came to the most important aspects in communication the respondents listed the need to be able to listen, be honest, be clear, direct but fair and have empathy, which are quite short statements to analyse deeply.

When asked about emotional intelligence, none of the respondents were able to define it fully. One was able to connect that it is about understanding reasons behind performance and decisions, but did not comment on the ability to be in control of these. Another commented that he is not an emphatic person and that empathy is not his strong suit.

7   Pilot training

This chapter discusses the pilot training, presenting results of the initial mapping, pilot training design and implementation, and exploring its findings. This chapter provides answers to the main research question as well as sub-questions. They are drawn together in the final subchapter summarising findings.

The pilot training day is based on the idea of developing leaders to succeed in working life. The pilot training has been designed with the help of the theoretical findings, initial observations, questionnaires, benchmarking and consultant interviewing.

Figure 3 in Chapter 2.2 indicated the most important skill in middle management or team leaders is the aspect of social and people skills, but these skills are amongst the most important and hardest to master as per the hierarchical model of management competencies (Figure 2 in Chapter 2.2). Hence, the author saw developing the skills related to these to be of the most value to the Organization X leaders at this point in their career.

As studies investigating the use of equines in leadership development are scarce, the author will test the approach in an organized pilot training. The training has two main purposes:
1. To develop the interaction skills of the leaders with experimental methods, by enhancing knowledge on non-verbal communication, and its effect on interaction
2. To test the successfulness of using horses in training

The questionnaire on ''**external's perceptions**'' was used before the actual the pilot training day was held. It was an open questionnaire in Google Forms that was shared at the workplace of the author and in social media openly. The questionnaire was used to gather more data on the topic and the general thoughts of people on emotional intelligence, interaction and leadership skills.

The ''**pre-pilot training day**'' questionnaire was used prior to the actual the pilot training day. It was drafted after deciding with the consultant that a Pilot Group training with horses will be held. It was sent once the Pilot Training Group participants had been determined. The aim was to find some background information on the leads, what kind of expectations and needs the leads may have of the training. The request to answer the questionnaire was sent to each participant by email. The questionnaire was made using Google Forms and consisted of only open-ended questions. The sent questionnaire can be found in Appendix 4.

The ''**post pilot training day**'' questionnaire was used after the pilot training day was held for evaluation purposes. The aim was to find out how the participants felt of the training and gather feedback on improvement ideas. The questionnaire was made using Google Forms and consisted of mostly open-ended questions, but also one likert scale question. The questionnaire and can be found in Appendix 7.

The HR consultant was also interviewed on her thoughts of the training day after it had been conducted and what improvements she would suggest to be made. The main questions for the face-to-face interview can be seen in Appendix 8.

The questionnaire on ''**training day reflections**'' by the participants was used after the pilot training day was held. The questions were asked for evaluation purposes. The questions were sent to the pilot group participants via email. These questions aimed to gather more in-depth information on the training day, possible emotional learnings and how the pilot group participants felt about being around horses and how it has affected their relationship with other participants. The questions can be seen in Appendix 9.

7.1   Construction of the pilot training

The construction of the pilot training is based on the finding that the need for leadership development seems to be in soft skills. More specifically the training will focus on the non-verbal element of interaction, which is related to and dependent on emotional intelligence skills.

The training is based on the experiential learning theory and the training participants are to take part in different exercises. These exercises are aimed at developing the more complex management competencies (Figure 2 in Chapter 2.2) of social and intrapersonal competencies (personal traits) of the participants. More specifically, the exercises are aimed at having developmental effects on multiple elements of the emotional competency framework (Table 2) and the non-verbal element of the message competence (Figure 4), which are needed in mastering social and intrapersonal competencies.

After the initial interview with the HR consultant it was decided that the external consultant and author would organize the pilot group training together. The author felt that as the consultant had previous experience from organizing leadership trainings her input could be valuable. In the first interview the consultant indicated that she sees trainings held at the office space not to be the most effective, which boosted the idea of conducting the

pilot training offsite. In addition to this, the questionnaire replies to the open audience on the methods of learning personal experiences and an external location to the workplace received higher marks, which could indicate that participants could be happier and therefore more motivated to participate in a training outside the office.

Goleman (2009, 250-252) has developed guidelines for emotional competence training, which can be seen in Appendix 9. The following elements of the guidelines have been considered when making the pilot training:

1. **Focus the training on the competencies which are most needed in the given role.**

Goleman's first point in relation to the guidelines for emotional intelligence training is to focus the training on competencies, which are needed. Based on the initial HR consultant interview and questionnaire on external perceptions findings the author believes that the skills leaders need are more and more related to soft skills, which is a challenge as often leaders arise from a position that requires strong hard skills.

In the external perceptions questionnaire some implied that confidence, not being a control freak, respect, humility and taking feedback are important qualities a leader should have. By implementing equines to leadership training and working with a large animal the author believes that these matters pointed out in the questionnaire can be trained. As per the experiential learning theory getting in touch with all the feelings discussed above happens by having a concrete experience and working with the horse as seen in.

The importance of feelings has been discussed multiple times in the theory part of this thesis. Feelings, understanding them and being able to control them, are parts of emotional intelligence, which is why this theory plays an important role in developing the pilot training. The thematic analysis of the articles similarly brought forward the importance of understanding feelings. The questionnaire on external perceptions implied that to the respondents successful interaction is about feelings on multiple levels. Based on these the author saw the need to construct a training that has its base in getting in touch with feelings and understanding their importance in interaction.

The author sees equines as good tools to be used for opening up feelings as they can be intimidating, but yet due to their social nature they can be very pleasant to work with.

2. Individual assessment is needed to analyze what needs improving.

Prior to the finalization of pilot group training day contents, the participants were asked for initial comments with the pre-pilot training day questionnaire to support the suggestion of Goleman to support on making an individual assessment on what improvement is needed. The replies showed that the participants all had very limited experience in a leadership position. Hence, as per the request of the organization and a joint decision by the author and HR consultant the plan was to include a basic non-equine related training on what being a leader is from the HR perspective and that this part would be facilitated by the HR consultant.

In addition to this, the pre-pilot training day questionnaire responses pointed towards the importance of successful communication and the need to have an atmosphere that enables openness. This can be connected to how one's behavior has social effects. This finding did not affect the content of the training significantly as it seemed to match the set training goal on gathering understanding on non-verbal communication and its affects.

3. The feedback on the strengths and weaknesses need to be given sensitively
4. Feedback should be given at all the time

Goleman's emotional competence training guidelines states the way of giving feedback and that it should happen continuously as important. As explained by Steelman and Rutkowski (2004, 8, 13) humans may have hidden agendas when giving feedback or political biases as explained by Kolb (2015, intro), which is why the author believes that human feedback is not necessarily the most effective.

Horses communicate non-verbally and they are experts in this field of communication. Due to the fact that horses lack the 'human biases' the author sees that the individuals participating in the training could see horses as more trustworthy and non-threatening feedback givers on non-verbal communication. Also, the reactions received from the horse can be more memorable than from working with other humans, which can be considered as normal every day life.

Horses observe their surroundings all the time. They reflect to the messages they receive immediately, which means that they constantly and instantly give feedback on what they see and sense. When an individual works with a horse they are constantly communicating non-verbally and the horse ongoingly reacting to the human and giving feedback.

5. Make change self-directed

Lastly, although some existing equine leadership trainings investigated in benchmarking focused on developing individuals in a team setting the author wanted to take a more personal approach, as the literature and thematic analysis show that the need for development lies on more personal traits. Furthermore, this allows the participant to ask more questions and concentrate on themselves. This allows the participant to take part in directing their own learning, which can make the experience more motivating.

Therefore, the planned day does not concentrate on large team exercises with herds of horses, but focuses on individual exercises with horses in different situations. Some of the exercises are done with different horses as this would give the participants the opportunity to understand that horses have their own personalities and differences when it comes to the way of reacting just like human individuals.

7.1.1 Pilot training day framework

The site for the pilot training is a private horse yard located about 60km from the Helsinki city centre in the country side. The stable consists of a yard area, stables, tack room, small kitchen, inside and outside arena and paddocks. The training day is mostly set in the inside arena. If the weather allows the outside training area with a terrace can also be used.

The main facilitator of the day is the author of this thesis. The day is divided into three parts and a closing session. Due to safety reasons and having two or three horses in use at the same time, the demonstration rider from Part 1 will help with the facilitator and support the participants doing mounted exercises when it comes to Part 3.

The below table shows the main frame used for the pilot training day and how the program has been built.

Table 3 Equine pilot training day framework

Time	Part	Content	Exercise	Needed
9.15 – 9.30	Arrival and settling down / coffee and breakfast			• Breakfast supplies by facilitator
9.30 – 10. 15	**Part 1** Introduction to the facility and horse riding	• Commonalities of leadership and horse riding • Communicating with horses	• Observation on demonstrator rider • Discussions together	• Facilitator, Horse 1 and demonstrator rider
10.15 – 11.30	**Part 2** Leadership theory and exercises	• What is a good leader?	• Team discussion • Example situations, pair work	• HR consultant, support from facilitator
11.30 – 12.15	Lunch			• Lunch supplies by facilitator
12.15 – 15.00	**Part 3** Working with horses Practical exercises with horses	• Non-verbal communication improvement • Improving personal traits	• Grooming • Mounted and unmounted exercises	• Horse 1, 2 and 3 • Facilitator and demonstration rider
15.00 – 15.30	**Part 4** Closing of the day	• Participant thoughts on the training day	• Open discussion by participants, consultant, author (facilitator)	• HR consultant, facilitator

The **Part 1** exercise is more on an observation level for the participants. It is conducted with the help of a demonstrating rider who is a professional when it comes to horses. This part is aimed at developing the social skills element of emotional competency framework (Table 2 in Chapter 4.1). More specifically, it is about building the awareness towards how a human and horse can communicate using non-verbal communication. In addition to this it aims at opening up the importance of empathy and what a human needs to consider when working with a horse. Furthermore, discussion on the leadership and influence relationship between a human and horse are to be brought up.

In addition to this, the author believes that from the perspective of participants, who are not familiar with horses, seeing a professional rider (demonstrator) and being able to ask questions the participants have an opportunity to familiarize with the animal.

The **Part 2** exercises are designed based on the fact that the participants have little leadership experience and Organization X would see some theoretical information to be useful. Furthermore, the aim of this Part is opening discussion between the participants to

help them develop a network of trust at the workplace, get to know each other, and to ask them to analyse themselves as leaders. The part will consist of a theoretical lecture given by the HR consultant. After this she will ask the participants to do exercises on difficult leadership situations and what a good leader is or can be from their opinion.

Part 3 is about doing practical exercises with the horses at the stable and in the inside arena, which is about 25m x 45m in size. The practical exercises aim to get the participants to learn from experiences that come from working with the horses. The participants develop by observing and reflecting on how the horse reacts to what they request, what the outcome of the request is, and why. As a result from this process they are able to develop their communication skills towards being more effective. More specifically, in this case the development happens in the area of non-verbal communication, as it is what horses use to communicate. To help with understanding these the facilitator is to offer help and explanations.

In addition to this, participants have the opportunity to face fears and build confidence by working with such a large animal, develop emotional control, and practice becoming more consistent and overall more aware of their communication. This requires considering how they move, what gestures are made and consideration of their facial expressions as horses are able to interpret some feelings that are expressed in a humans face.

Grooming is the first exercise completed and is used to explain the significance of human body language when approaching the horse and how feelings are visible in this. This part will also help to introduce the participants to the animals from a close distance. The horses will be tied to a wall to limit their movement possibilities and make it easier for the humans to get to know and touch the horse.

Mounted (riding) and other unmounted exercises (lunging and walking the horse) can help to develop the personal competencies of self-awareness and self-regulation. As the horses will no longer be limited and tied to a wall the importance of correct communication increases. Self-control within self-regulation can be developed throughout the exercises as the participants needs to act calm and trustworthy, be focused on a mental and physical level, and have self-discipline to do things steadily, in order to succeed in the exercises with the horse. Communication with horses requires self-control and emotional awareness all the time. The situation of working with a horse may be intimidating to those who have not worked with horses before and it may offer the possibility to lead (an animal) in an uncertain situation, which also requires the participant to face fears and control emotions.

The participants need be consistent and align their physical cues with their thoughts (emotions). The participants will repeat the exercises multiple times to develop their communication. Consistency is also about being confident. It is likely that an exercise, like asking the horse to trot when lunged, won't be succeeded in at once, which requires the human to try again. Succeeding requires being determined to reach the goal and knowing what the human wants.

Furthermore, to develop the empathetic and social skills of emotional competence framework the participants are asked to clearly reinforce the correct behaviour of the horse with confidence and by showing positivity when doing so. This happens with a tap on the horse's neck strengthened by a verbal cue. It is a praise but also a tool to build a bond between the horse and make the human appear as a more inspiring leader for the horse. The facilitator will be present to help the participant and explain successes or how something can be corrected. These can help the participant to create more accurate self-awareness.

Self-confidence can be improved when riding the horse in particular. Getting on the horse requires a highly level of self-confidence due to the size of the animal and it being an unfamiliar situation. However, as people are different, for some, already the exercise of grooming and walking such a large animal can help to develop confidence in oneself.

Due to the nature of the horse, the same exercise can be attempted again and the facilitator is due to give advice to the participants on how their actions may seem to the horse and how they could be corrected to reach a desired goal. The exercises are not demanding in nature for the horse, which allows the possibility for the participants to do multiple different exercises with the same horse, and test their learn non-verbal communication with another horse to see the other horses individual reaction.

7.1.2 Participant selection

Company X offered to use their newly appointed leaders for the Pilot Group training. The organization operates in the technological industry and the majority of the employees come from an engineering background, and hence have developed skills based on their work experience.

There were six employees whom had risen to a lead position in July 2018 from a software engineer role. These individuals became the final selected participants and they were

chosen by the author, external consultant and Organization X. This selection seemed to have the most benefit for the organization, individuals themselves as well as the target group need for the pilot testing. This is since they came from a background where hard skills had paid a crucial role in career development. In addition to this, for the individuals giving some training to cope with the new position seemed necessary as no other trainings were offered to them at the time by their employer.

After the potential pilot group individuals had been determined with the external HR consultant, the author approached each person on 15th of August 2018, and asked them in a brief and informal manner if they would be interested to participate in a leadership training outside of the office with animals. Each individual was interested, which led to determining the exact day for all and further planning of the content.

7.1.3   Connection of horses to emotional intelligence

As per Goleman's guidelines for emotional intelligence training in Chapter 7.1. The feedback on the persons strengths and weaknesses should be given with care. In equine assisted learning the horse is the primary feedback giver. When using horses, and that the feedback is given by an animal, the feedback becomes more acceptable. As explained by Steelman and Rutkowski (2004, 8, 13) humans may have hidden agendas when giving feedback or political biases as explained by Kolb (2015, intro). This not the case with horses, which is why feedback from them becomes more respectable and acceptable.

Furthermore, the guidelines suggest giving continuous feedback, which is what happens with horses as they constantly communicate. This means that they observe and react all the time to the messages sent by the human. Working with horses begins from 'simple' exercises and each participant receives immediate feedback from the animal. The facilitator is able to interpret and guide each participant during the exercises to make sure the goals are met. The exercises are fairly physical and have visible goals.

As Goleman states, learning related to emotions needs deeper changes at the neurological level. This requires weakening existing habits and replacing them with improved ones. The development of emotional intelligence requires the need to understand the basics of behavior change, which is often missed in existing trainings. (2009, 244.)

As explained by Greene horses are herd animals and are dependent on being social (2008, 22). This means that they need to be able to communicate with each other. To a great extent, horses do this by using body language, which makes them experts in this field. Humans often fail when it comes to observing body language. (Roberts 2002, 777 & 1058.) As the survival of the horse depends on the ability of being constantly aware of the happenings in its surroundings, reading non-verbal communication, and being able to sense emotions, as an animal it can be considered to be emotionally intelligent. (Roberts 2002, 1028.)

Body language reflects to feelings and how able one is to manage these, which are elements of emotional intelligence (Goleman 2009, 5636). Mersino discusses how the essential thing in self-awareness is understanding feelings at the exact moment they happen. Emotions cause physical reactions in the body, which can be used to understand feelings. These reactions can be heartbeat rate, muscle tightness, temperature feelings (hot or cold) and facial expressions. (Mersino 2007, 33, 36.)

Moreover, in order for a human to succeed in interacting with a horse they are required to have awareness of others and try and understand the feelings and perspectives of the horse as the horse is not able to easily explain this to the human. These are both elements of Table 2 in Chapter 4.1. In addition to this, the human needs self-awareness and understanding on what his/her internal state is communicating. If not, the facilitator is able to direct the learnee and explain what the horse is potentially seeing and how this could be fixed. As fright animal, a horse will run away if these are coming out as negative or threatening. Because of this clarity and visibility, a horse is a good tool to be used in understanding how important ''meaning what you say'' is.

7.1.4 Emotional intelligence and leadership development

Goleman (2009, 240) states that it is one thing to know theoretically how somethings should be (declarative knowledge), then actually knowing how to do things in practice (procedural knowledge). This is where experiential learning comes into place. In the pilot training new behavior is learnt by working with horses from the ground and even by riding.

From Isotalus and Rajalahti (2017, 26) it can be understood that interaction skills can be developed and that this requires change in behavior. However, the interaction evaluation that is received can depend greatly on the person who gives it. Kolb (2015, intro) explains that humans are influenced by the political and social contexts and are biased when it comes to judging social issues. Therefore, interaction development with humans is

challenging as this bias is always present. Horses do not possess these qualities and are therefore are more objective when it comes to giving feedback. Therefore, they are potentially more efficient in giving interaction feedback to humans.

Leadership as a duty requires interaction, which is affected by behavior. When it comes to developing these Goleman explains that in order to learn new behavior, the automatic response by the brain needs to be replaced. He continues on to suggest that this requires doing practical exercises, as the academic models does not fit this learning purpose due to the fact that the emotional part of the brain learns differently. Currently, using electronic tools for development is common, but this does not work either when developing emotional intelligence, as these tools don't possess skills related to emotional intelligence. (Goleman 2009, 5847-5849.)

A similar problem arises when practicing this with other humans. It is not possible to know their emotional intelligence level easily. In addition to this, humans may have hidden agendas when giving feedback as explained by Steelman and Rutkowski (2004, 8, 13) or political biases as explained by Kolb (2015, intro), which is not the case with horses. In order to successfully develop in emotional intelligence, it needs to be done with someone who has high emotional intelligence quotidian, like horses which relies on communicating non-verbally and by sensing physiological changes.

Freud found that in a therapeutic human to human session, the facial expressions of a therapist can be interpreted as disapproving by the other human. Freud used dogs for therapeutic purposes and found that a dog does not react similarly. The animal remains passive and therefore acts reassuring, while a therapeutic patient continues with the story although the story could be disapproving for another human. Freud concluded this gives the patient the feeling of safety and acceptance, and confidence to express any weighing issues. (Fine 2015, xx.)

When working with the horse the human can see the animals' honest reactions, which are reflected from human behavior. Horses are freight animals and they instantly run away from a situation which they feel is dangerous. (Roberts 2013, 22.) Horses are non-judgemental in nature and they allow behavioral modifications to be made immediately, which gives the possibility for the learner to see how the behavioral change affects the animal immediately (Coaching with horses).

Harm et al. discuss how stress is present in leadership and how it has physiological effects (2017, 178-179). As horses mirror behavior and can sense human physiological

changes like heartbeat rate the human needs to be aware of one's true feelings and how these affect the animal. Horses can be used as tools to help develop self-control and keeping calm when working in an unusual setting, as many have little experience when it comes to working with such a large animal. As Roberts explained he has learnt to keep his heart beat rate low in stressful situations and this happens with self-control, which is an element of self-regulation. (Roberts 2013, 22.)

In practice one of the major hypothesis on using a horse for communication training lies in its honesty and ability to read several non-verbal signs when giving feedback to the human. Steelman and Rutkowski (2004, 6) discuss how feedback is more motivational when it comes from a source that has high credibility. Credibility refers to a source's expertise and trustworthiness. Horses live in the moment and as prey animals are honest in their communication. They can be considered as experts in non-verbal communication. By using them for interaction development the human aspect is eliminated together with any hidden agendas or attitudes behind the feedback. In this matter horses can be considered to be trustworthy and the feedback they give is credible. Therefore, the recipient (human) may be more motivated to accept the feedback from a horse when it comes to non-verbal communication. (2004, 8 & 13.)

7.2   Pilot group training day

The Pilot Group participants were invited to a training day without giving much detail. This was done to avoid prejudices and to avoid the participants to search for information on the topic themselves. The information that was given by the author was that the training was to be held offsite and animals were involved.

After arriving to the stables, the leaders stepped out of their cars slowly looking around suspiciously. The facilitator then met the group and welcomed them to the stable and instructed the group towards breakfast.

7.2.1   Part 1: Introduction

The training started with the facilitator explaining why the participants are at the location and how it is related to her Master Thesis, this was done while breakfast and coffee was served. Right after this, the facilitator began to explain similarities of horse riding and leadership together with a rider demonstrating.

Image 1 Demonstration

It was described that when one comes to the stable to do work with a horse there always needs to be a clear plan on what to do. One cannot just come in and quickly 'jump' on a horse and expect results. Preparation and planning is needed. It is the same in working life and in leadership, one cannot expect the team to perform well if there is no plan to follow. The rider explained the importance of the human position and how it affects the horse. For the horse this is one of the tools for communication and how they understand the human. Therefore, it is important for a human to be aware of one's own body and how it is placed, as this will have a great effect on the horse.

Posture (sitting upright and balanced like the rider as in Image 1 above) is very important in riding and when communicating to the horse from the ground. It can tell the animal that the human is not a predator, but trustworthy and an alpha that is willing to protect the horse. (Roberts 2002, 74). The importance of posture is also valuable to acknowledge in human communication. As an example, leaning forward can imply domination and be intimidating to others. (Lawton 2006, 6). Horses are very good to practice awareness with and how the body is placed. They will react physically to this and due to the size of their movement it is easy for humans to notice.

In Image 1 above the demonstrator is also showing the importance of contact (human hand connection via the rain to the horse's mouth) and body position when horse riding. This connection, together with body signals from the seat and the legs are used for communication. All of these elements need to be consistent and have a common goal as otherwise the horse will not react as wanted. As an example, one cannot pull from the reins and squeeze with the legs, as pulling from the reins would mean the request to slow down/stop and on the contrary squeezing with the legs would ask the horse to move forward. A rider needs to be very conscious and self-aware on what different elements are signaling and what is being asked from the horse. In the post training day questionnaire, the importance of consistency was discussed by a leader and how it is important when it comes to sending messages.

Competition situations were also discussed and that a human is not always able to affect what happens outside the ring and how that affects the horse. A rider needs to understand and accept that there are things that are out of their personal control and have confidence in the animal and that it will do the best it can. The leaders found this to be a very interesting point and one leader commented on this matter in the post training day questionnaire. Instead of trying to practice how to control everything, one should rather be building a relationship of trust.

The rider, facilitator and pilot group participants also discussed the initial training stages of the horse. The facilitator explained how previously a lot of commanding and controlling was used, but now modern horse training is more about communication and rewarding. This opened up a conversation on firmness. The facilitator explained that although the aim is to train the horse with as much kindness as possible, this does not mean that the horse is allowed to 'walk over' the human, boundaries need to be set when needed. There are times when a horse needs to be firmly told that the human is the leader and that the horse needs to respect this. In the post training day questionnaire one of the leaders referred to this. It can be assumed that this example woke up some thoughts in the participant and that it became more evident that being a good leader does not mean always being flexible and trying to accommodate the other side, sometimes one needs to be firm and straightforward.

7.2.2 Part 2: Leadership theory and exercises

As this was a first leadership training for this group in question and the facilitator has some uncertainties on how much the participants wanted to work with horses, the external HR consultant held a small theoretical training session based on leadership and how the individuals would like to be perceived as leaders.

To begin, the participants were asked to write down on post-it notes how they would like to be seen as leaders and present these to others. This exercise can be seen below in image 2. The consultant encouraged open discussion on the topic among the participants and what kind of similarities or differences had been brought up. In the below image Participant Z is giving his view on what he would like to be seen as a leader and the other participants are listening or taking notes.

Image 2 HR consultant training session

After the presentations, communication was a theme that rose up by several participants in their post-it notes. The importance of communication was then discussed in more detail and how it is not just about verbally succeeding, but also how non-verbality plays an important role. In this open discussion the facilitator was able to comment on how some of the points discussed have commonalities when it comes to working with equines and doing horse riding.

The leaders were also given challenging working life example situations by the consultant, for example what to do if an employee acts aggressively towards their leader. They were asked to discuss the possible solutions in the situation given first in a small team and then in a group.

The consultant session was held at the end of the horse riding arena and throughout the session there were several riders who came in to the arena to exercise their horses and the participants were able to observe them.

7.2.3 Part 3: Practical exercises with horses

The last part of the day was about doing practical exercises with horses. Three horses were chosen; Carlos, Capri and Lavilan Kreivi, as their personalities suited the needs. Carlos is an experienced older competition horse that is very comfortable in changing environments and having different people handle him. He is extremely calm to work with from the ground. Capri is an older horse with a very gentle temperament and tolerates unexperienced riders well. Lavilan Kreivi is younger and enthusiastic but has been trained for movies and is very comfortable in new situations and with loud sounds. He tolerates quick human movements well and by nature he is very social and kind.

7.2.3.1 Grooming

This began by the group entering the stable and meeting three horses. The facilitator randomly picked three individuals from the group who had the task of taking the horse out of the box and walk it to the care pen. Then the leaders were able to approach the horse for brushing and tacking up.

When walking the horse, the facilitator was able to comment on the leader's body language and how this can be changed to create a better result. When walking a horse back to the box Leader V was not in control of the horse the horse was walking the leader instead the other way around and had no respect to the human. This was due to high amounts of tension (as an example the shoulders had risen high up and body language was far from confident and comfortable). The facilitator asked him to stop the horse and lower his shoulders and take a few deep breaths to balance his heartbeat. After a small amount of relaxation, the leader was able to communicate to the horse that there is nothing to worry about with his presence and calmness, which ended up the horse following him in a calmer manner. These types of interactions with the horses happened throughout the day in different exercises and settings. With the help of the facilitator the horse's response and the participant's response can be explored as a learning opportunity.

First, simply getting the horse out of the box and walk the horse to a tax box in a controlled way was the task. Entering a small space where a big animal is, is not always

easy for a person who has no experience with horses. It is important to have self-awareness and self-control, so that the horse does not hesitate and get scared of the new acquaintance. If the human is on a bad mood or very nervous the horse will recognize these feelings and starts to 'think' that there is a reason for him to act a similar way- is there a threat around? This already acts as the first connection to the emotional intelligence framework.

After entering the box, the participants need to get the halter on the horses' head. Using non-verbal communication and by being in control of one's emotions the emotional intelligence frameworks social skills are needed. The human needs to encourage and by influencing persuade the horse to accept the halter, and the human that wants to put it on. Already for this task the human needs to act with self-awareness (recognizing emotions and how they may affect the situation), self-regulation (controlling the emotions that may be arising by possibly not succeeding at first as the horse decides to lift its head high up, or being scared of the large moving animal), and by social skills (communicating and sending convincing (non-verbal) messages that the halter and human are both safe).

Next, the horses were brushed and prepared for the in-practice exercises in the arena. For this similar emotional intelligence framework attributes are needed, as the horse is constantly observing the human, and how the human is behaving. As an example, Participant Z approached the head of the horse quickly and the horse dodged. The head of the horse is sensitive and needs to be approached in a calm manner. After this 'failure' the participant became slightly apprehensive about the brushing situation, and the horse began to mirror the behavior and began to step around nervously. The facilitator took the brush away from the participant and gave him a piece of bread to feed to the horse. The facilitator instructed the participant to gently stroke the muzzle of the horse once the horse accepts the treat. Both the horse and the participant calmed down with the help of the treat, and the behaviors were corrected.

The situation can be seen partly from the image below. Carlos (on the right) is slightly apprehensive on what the participant is doing to him as he is moving towards the head area. The feeling the horse is experiencing can be seen from the position of the ears and head; Carlos has his head elevated, which is a sign of apprehension. His ears are saying that there is something close to him which he is concerned about. As a comparison, Kreivi (on the left) is relaxed and content with the situation, his head is in a 'normal' position slightly lowered which means that he is listening to the human. One ear is pointed forwards which shows signs of interest and sociability to what is happening in front of him, the. The other ear is slightly to the side which is a sign of relaxation. (Roberts 2013, 14).

Image 3 Kreivi and Carlos getting brushed by the pilot group participants

After the grooming exercise Kreivi was put back to his box as he had suffered an injury and could not be used in the other exercises. Carlos and Capri were used in the mounted and other unmounted exercises as explained in the next chapters.

7.2.3.2 Unmounted exercises

Carlos was used for the participants to practice lunging. Lunging is exercising the horse from the ground in a circle. The humans' task is to ask the horse to move in walk, trot or canter on the other end of the line. The lunge circle should be as large as possible (about 9m diameter, as working on small circles is not good for the horse physically and this needs to be understood by the human). In practice, the 'lunger' should decide the diameter of the circle and keep the horse constantly at the same distance. The signals are given to the horse by the human non-verbally while the human aims to remain in the centre of the circle.

The below figure shows Participant Z working with Carlos on a small circle. In the image the participant is trying to get Carlos to move out on the circle in order to make it a little bigger in size and go to trot (move forward a little faster). Unfortunately, Carlos is walking on the same sized circled and remaining in walk. In order to ask for a quicker pace the lunger was saying ''come on Carlos'' in a supportive voice and at the same time flexing his knees going to a lowering position and coming up again.

Image 4 Pilot Group Participant Z practicing lunging with Carlos

As Roberts (2013, 106-107) explains, in lunging the non-verbal communication of the human plays an important role. As the horse is walking to the right the right hand of the human acts as the 'leading hand' and shows the horse that the direction to go is to the right (the excess lunge line is held in the left hand). The right leg should be also acting as the leading leg, in the picture you can see both feet are next to each other. The human should be constantly following the direction in which the horse is going, but the feet in the figure say the human is standing in one place, there should be slight movement to the right.

To make upward (e.g. from walk to trot) transitions a sharp and energetic voice queue is given. In the picture, it can be seen that Participant Z is aiming to get the horse to trot, but the horse did not react. The participants body language is controversial, feet next to each other communicate a slowing body language (a stop). However, at the same time, he is leaning forwards which is asking for activity, but the energy to push the horse forward and to trot is missing. For the horse the messages sent by the were not convincing and believable, and because of this it did not react the wanted way. This can be reflected to social skills and being able to get wanted reactions from the message recipients.

From the perspective of the Communication Competence Model (Figure 2) the element of non-verbal competence in the message competence was not succeeded in. The lunger was not able to use his body movement and vocal characteristics together effectively to

express what was wanted. This exercise shows how important all these aspects are in communication.

When Participant Y lunged Carlos he was using verbal cues, but from the perspective of the horse this was done controversially. To slow Carlos down the participant was using the command of ''prrrrr'', but he was using this command with a high-pitched voice. This caused confusion to the horse and therefore there was no reaction. The facilitator explained to the participant to use low sounds for slowing down and high pitched energetic cues for speeding up. After correcting the verbal cues, correct reactions from the horse were received.

When it came to demonstrating the significance of body language the facilitator was working with Participant V in the inside arena. The task was for the leader to walk the horse from point A to point B and be in control- the horse following the human and not the other way around. The facilitator pointed out to Participant V that his body language is extremely tensed. Shoulders were elevated, arms were tense and hands holding the rope to the horse were held high up, rather than being relaxed. The horse was constantly in front of the human and coming to the human's personal space. Again, the facilitator asked Leader A to stop and reflect on his body language think about relaxing. The facilitator demonstrated how nervous a horse can become with a tensed human. This was done by the facilitator moving to stand directly in front of the leader and horse, next she raised her hands up in the air and took a few determined steps toward Leader A and the horse. As a reaction the horse immediately raised his head and tensed up his body. With this the leader understood the importance of using more relaxed body language to walk the horse in a more controlled manner to where he wanted to go.

Image 5 Participant G walking the horse

In the above image Participant G is walking the horse. His facial expression is content and he seems relaxed. The horse is also relaxed and satisfied based on a lowered head and ears pointing to the sides. Participant G had a natural way of being around horses and he was calm, clear and had a certain positivity when it came to working with Carlos especially.

7.2.3.3 Mounted exercises

Capri was used for riding purposes. In the below two participants are grooming Capri together and learning from the demonstrator rider what it takes to prepare a horse for exercising and how the gear is placed on them.

Image 6 Participant Y and V preparing Capri for riding

In the below image you can see Participant W doing ground exercise with Carlos while Participant Y is riding Capri. Mounting a horse itself requires confidence. By riding a horse, the rider begins to create a relationship with the animal and learns how one is able to control and influence the animal by using non-verbal communication. Self-awareness, and more specifically the element of self-confidence is an important skill for leaders to have in order to be able to influence their subordinates. When on the horse emotional control is needed, as the horse is able to sense and react to these.

Image 7 Participant W working from the ground with Carlos and Participant Y riding Capri

Posture was also practiced when riding Capri. A mirror is placed in the arena for riders to be able to look at their position when riding and make necessary corrections. In Image 5 Participant Y has received some instructions from the demonstrator rider walking next to him and is looking at the mirror to make corrections and observe himself.

Horse riding is a good method to gather further understanding on empathy and how the horse may understand or feel about something. As an example, there may be an unfamiliar item in the arena, which the horse sees as scary. To the human this may not look like anything, but the human needs to be able to understand how the horse may see this and why it reacts in a particular way.

7.2.3.4 Team building

The experience also acted as a possibility to enhance teamwork and social skills. Participants were able to bonds and collaborate with each other in an external environment. These are elements of the relationship management attribute in emotional intelligence. In the below image you can see the Participants gathering around the horse and finding something unusual to familiarize and talk about.

Image 8 Team bonding

Furthermore, one can see from the above image that there is something inviting in the horse as many wish to touch, pat and scratch them without request. Touching is an important haptic element when it comes to communication cues with horses, but can also have great meaning in human to human communication. As explained by Tenholm and Jensen (2013, 66) touching can mean all the difference if one is trying to reassure or patronize another as the way one touches can have a great meaning.

7.3 Analysis of pilot group training day

To analyse the pilot group training day and its contents the author examined the questionnaire responses by the participants, HR consultant reflections and the authors own observations from the conducted pilot training as the facilitator.

7.3.1 Post training day and participant reflection questionnaires

After the training day was completed the participants received an electronic questionnaire for feedback collection purposes. The overall feedback was very positive and the day was enjoyable. Below are some examples on the comments:

- Being outside the office was useful to avoid daily work disturbance
- I found the practical approach with less talking and more practice to be very interesting and useful. It gave me a good possibility to practice the need to not try to control everything, but rather build trust between two sides
- Being outside the office was a pleasure and having people focused on what everyone was saying instead of their electronic devices was a breath of fresh air. It gave the possibility to feel like we were an actual group.

Two of the respondents pointed out that being outside the office was a good experience and enabled the participants to focus. The author had hoped for this when designing the pilot training day.

The responses on the learnings were quite short and difficult to analyse. The element of understanding the importance of clear communication and body language was mentioned. As a development area the participants would have liked to see more activities with horses and overall if there is a ''lecture'' like section it should have more interaction.

On a scale of 1 to 10 the pilot day received the score of 9.5 from the participants with the confirmation that this type of training should be offered to other leaders in the organization.

As the responses to post-training day were quite short the author asked the participants a few months later to go back and analyse the training in order to gather more understanding on the conducted training. Five participants responded to this (participant reflections quesionnaire). The questions aimed to gather a deeper understanding on feelings and emotions that came from working with horses.

In the reflections 4 a few of the participants pointed out how the external setting of the training was good and enabled a relaxed environment, which allowed the possibility to focus on the training. Many of the participants describe how the shared experience has allowed the participants to form and develop a relationship with each other.

When it comes to the main learnings from the day by the participants social skills seemed to be in the focus, which was due to communication. More specifically, these related to non-verbal communication.

- I think the main takeaway is that it made me realize the importance that can have the body language
- I feel that the training reinforced a strong need to observe emotion and unspoken or visual cues. Looking back at past people leadership decisions I felt that those signs were there but I did not react to them early enough. My focus has been more on the operational side of leadership and this showed me that working more on personal relationships is of great importance and an area where I can improve.''

In relation to communication one participant had an interesting realization on how a relationship needs to be built with the animal and that this does not come automatically. In this case physical effort was used to build the bond with the animal. In addition to this the participant commented on the importance of sending consistent messages.

- Setting the correct path requires preparation (such as grooming the horse and getting to know each other) and then making sure that the message is clear and

that you don't contradict yourself (giving clear direction to the horse with all cues following the same unified direction.)
- It felt like an achievement to get the horses to perform as directed and really fed into the message that you must be confident and give clear direction whilst still paying attention to the many environmental factors in play.

Self-regulation; being able to adapt to the new situation, and empathy; understanding others also received some attention. One participant commented the following:
- the training also showed me that there are always other (environmental, personal, organizational) factors that will need to be taken into account to keep on the right path (such as if the ground is uneven or the horse loses a shoe) which might require you to re-evaluate the direction you have given, quickly but decisively.

The participant describes that a horse may lose a shoe, which may result in the horse not being to perform to the best of its ability, but the human must understand this and be able to rethink the situation.

Furthermore, on self-regulation self-control received a fair amount of attention. The below comments bring out the idea of optimism (a skill related to motivation) and how self-control sometimes means letting go and trusting others, and even if mistakes happen emotions are kept under control as sometimes mistakes are unavoidable but don't require punishment.
- it showed how giving clear directions and instructions can be enough when leading. As we are not always in a situation where we can have full control or do all the work, we need to learn how to work with them and let others do what they can do best.
- The other very nice concept which stuck with me is the thought that "horses live in the moment/present", meaning they do not let the past affect how they interact with others in the present and really do not stress about a future which may or may not be. I think that is something to keep in mind every time we approach/work with others as usually we have a tendency of letting past experiences affect way too much how we act in the moment and towards others.

Self-control more specifically received multiple comments from the participants, and how the participants felt working with horses affected the,
- It was a very good experience for me. I was very satisfied with how I handled myself in that situation. I feel I got proof that I can react to unexpected scary context with a calm and open-minded attitude.
- I learned to accept and be more relaxed in situations where I cannot be fully in control, either due to physical strength differences (i.e. the horse is far stronger, physical strength alone will not help the person be in control) or due to lack of specific knowledge (i.e. leverage the knowledge of others, build trust and work together to achieve the common result).
- I was not surprised that I was nervous at first, as I have a tendency of thinking of what could go wrong and try to find ways to prevent it. But again, the event showed that it is not worth stressing about it, but rather approach each situation with an open mind and enjoy the moment.
- I felt the excitement to connect to them but kept it under control.
- as you may recall I was somewhat nervous, but with the help of some coaching and seeing how calm and responsive the animal was it became quite pleasant.
- I felt the need to concentrate and show respect for them

Some participants felt a certain type of proudness when they were able to get the planned results from the animal. In emotional intelligence, these were related to personal-competences of self-awareness and self-regulation:

- It felt like an achievement to get the horses to perform as directed and really fed into the message that you must be confident and give clear direction whilst still paying attention to the many environmental factors in play.
- While working with the horses, at the beginning I felt a bit of apprehension but then, I became proud when I managed to walk Carlos rather properly.

The two above comments can be connected to the element of self-confidence that has come from being able to get the animal to reach as planned.

To multiple participants the pilot training seemed to have effects on relationship management; building bonds, teamwork and collaborating with the other participants. This element seemed to receive the clearest comments from all participants.

- Being away from the office or the usual conference center / hotel setting allowed me to really focus on the training and to bond with the other participants. I was not checking my phone and felt very present in the moment.
- I'm not sure it affected how I see others in general, but it definitely did affect my relationship with the other participants. As we now have this experience in common, I feel maybe a bit closer to them and discussion with them probably became easier. It wouldn't have been the case if we did a more "traditional" training''
- the event helped getting to know some of the other members better and made it easier to find out how each individual can be approached.
- I learned a lot about my colleagues on that day, the way that we would approach situations varied and it certainly gave me perspective on how issues can be tackled from other points of view. I definitely feel that it has made it easier to approach them and helped build relationships further than would have been achieved without this experience.
- the event helped getting to know some of the other members better and made it easier to find out how each individual can be approached.

As explained in chapter 6.3.1.1 on background research, the author had noticed some tension at the workplace with the group of leaders. One participator commented in the post training day questionnaire that the training day gave the participants the possibility to feel like an actual group and another leader similarly commented that there is a feeling that the group got to know each other a little better. The author sees this as a huge success towards building a workplace where people work happily and successfully with each other.

As improvement points the participants commented on:

- Horse thing ok, but needs maybe some excersice when only 2 people can work with horses on the same time. Also I think the leadership"lecture"does not work.
- The slide/discussion part (the off-horse part) could use a refactoring.
- more horse riding activity
- I would try to focus on a specific topic and go deeper into it.

This shows that horses as training tools were accepted very well, but the participants would like to see more activities on horses and more focus in the content of the training.

7.3.2 HR consultant post-training day reflections

After the pilot training had been held the author interviewed and analysed the day with the external consultant. This happened in an open manner, but the frame for the questions the author used can be seen in Appendix 8.

As an improvement point the consultant commented that more interaction with horses and other leaders would be a better approach. The day should contain more activities and with the current context a group of four leaders could work better. The author asked if during her career the consultant has seen similar trainings conducted by companies. The consultant replied that she has not seen anything similar and that many rely on the traditional classroom approach, but perhaps in a separate location to the office. In most of the cases, matters are considered with a more theoretical background. This could even be a training for top management, where the individuals are highly trained. This could be a very disparate way for training with a new twist to experienced individuals who have seen a lot.

Furthermore, the consultant also commented that for the highly stressed and busy managers this could be a good way to relax and understand that one is not able to move large masses without having direction on where to go, how to get there with the adequate means. A horse is a large mass that needs to be moved and in an organization there may be thousands of people that need to be moved and one must always have a plan, and if it doesn't work out as planned one must practice and try again.

As a recommendation for the author the consultant encouraged more investigation and piloting, especially to managers who have already seen it all and ask how they feel about this training.

7.3.3 Facilitator observations

From Part 1 (introduction phase) the facilitator made the observation that the leaders especially enjoyed the explanation of a competition situation, where a rider cannot necessarily control what is happening in the surroundings and must trust and encourage the horse to perform as well as possible throughout the event. This is a topic that was

brought up several times during the day and was commented on in the post-training day feedback.

When it comes to the Part 2 (leadership theory and exercises) the facilitator noticed potential signs that the leaders would have wanted to start interacting with the horses earlier on. The participants were getting a little restless and the classroom like theory session by the external consultant did not seem to create much interest. However, the participants had good discussions on the example cases with each other. This was also implied to in the feedback.

In Part 3 (practical exercises with horses) the facilitator was helping the participants with the demonstrator. The facilitator and demonstrator were both helping the participants in grooming. Once grooming was finished the demonstrator was helping with the mounted exercises and facilitator with the unmounted exercises.

The facilitator noticed that it was not the simplest exercise for the leaders to approach a large animal and ask for it to follow them. A horse needs to be approached with calmness and a certain amount of respect, but a lot of apprehension could be seen from the leaders. The horses reacted by e.g. turning away or too eagerly trying to leave the box, which meant a loss of control to the participants. When an unwanted reaction happened, the facilitator explained and reflected on why the horse had reacted this way, and then asked the participant to try again. These discussions seemed to be of interest to the participants and helped them understand how an external sees their actions without getting defensive.

Overall, as there were two horses and six participants the author noticed that the four participants who were waiting for their turn were getting a little restless from standing around.

Part 4 was the wrap up for the day and mostly consisted of individual comments by the participants on how they felt about the training day in general.

Overall, the author noticed that working with horses gave the participants the possibility to network with each other and build social relationships. From observing the participants discuss together in a positive spirit, and the way they shared the experience of e.g. grooming the animal together, the author is certain that initial steps towards building stronger relationship was taken. This was enabled by partly the fact that there was no work environment pressure and that there was something external, a horse, which was given as a tool to the participants to connect with each other.

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7.4 Evaluation of the pilot training

When it comes to evaluating the pilot training the Finnish Education Performance Evaluation model is used for guidance. The educational outcome segments of efficiency and effectiveness are evaluated.

The training is considered to be **efficient** when the organization of the training, flexibility and timing are as meaningful as possible, and the quality of teaching is good. (Opetushallitus 1998, 20)

When evaluating the **effectiveness** of the training, its relevance is of importance. This means the training needs to be practical, sensible and useful. (Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer 2009, 55). The training is considered as effective when the results are supporting the individuals' psychic grown and the development of the society, culture and work life. (Opetushallitus 1998, 21)

7.4.1 Efficiency

Overall, based on the score given by the participants the training day was highly successful. The average grade given was 9.2 out of 10, which can be considered as an excellent score.

Opetushallitus states (1998, 29) that ''the content should meet the needs of working life and be based on the most recent and reliable information available''. For the participants the timing of the training was suitable. The participants were appointed in the leadership positions in July 2018 and the training was held in mid-September 2018. Based on the theoretical discussion of this thesis developing interaction skills is of relevance to the leaders, and an important aspect of work ability. Specifically, the use of equines in leadership development has not been studied to a great extent, but the discussion in this study on the usefulness on integrating horses to interaction development training seems valid.

When it came to the *organization of the training day* and the *quality of teaching*, both can be considered as successful. One participant specifically commented on the organization of the day and how it was better than many other ''professional'' trainings. More specifically, successful teaching is characterized by the fact that the teaching arrangements are in line with the learning goals. Therefore, it is necessary to assess the the learning environment, which also plays a part in the teaching arrangements.

The learning environment was appreciated by the participants as it allowed a relaxed atmosphere and the possibility to focus on what is being taught. Therefore, as an environment it was successful as the participants had reduced amounts of interruptions then what they would at the regular workplace (mobile phone, emails, colleagues). In addition to this, as an environment it supported activity, individuality and a versatile way of learning, which are mentioned as part of the evaluation criteria for teaching methods. In relation to this, the external consultant commented that as a location the workplace is difficult for trainings, as interruptions are likely and that as one has one's own role at the workplace it is difficult to detach from it. On the negative side, the environment is not the safest as it requires working with large animals.

Furthermore, the quality of teaching was on an adequate level as the trainers had extensive experience from their own fields. The equine professional does not need to be a mental health professional as psychotherapy is not the intention. The consultant had many years of experience in supporting leaders and working as a HR consultant. The demonstrating rider is a horse industry professional with competition, rider training and industry business experience. The author/facilitator has over a decade of daily experience with horses and has insights to the training needs within Organization X, combined with in depth studies that have been done in communication and in the equine assisted service field for leadership development.

The overall success of the day is also reflected on the fact that all participants have confirmed that they would like to take part in the training again.

7.4.2 Effectiveness

The effectiveness of communication training is verified with the transfer of learning. In practice this means how something learn in one situation can be transferred to another. (Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer 2009, 55.) The evaluation on how the participants have integrated their leaning in theory to their work situations is done based on the participant feedback.

A training is seen as effective when the outcomes develop the individual and society culturally and in working life (Opetushallitus 1998, 33). From the perspective of society, the training gave new information, tools and experiences to the participants, which can be of use in their working life and when developing others (subordinates). Based on the rising importance on soft skills (which includes communication) in working life the training has

given further understanding and tools for the pilot group participants how to develop this, and therefore can be considered to have been effective.

When evaluating effectiveness, the most important subjects to evaluate are the results it has on the individual and the society (Opetushallitus 1998, 34). On the individual level, when it comes to matters learnt from the training the pilot group participant feedback is used for the analysis. The feedback included insights on how to incorporate horses in daily life and work. These have been in relation to control, presence, communication and relations with others. This confirms that the training has awoken thoughts and therefore enabled skill development of the participants. One of the main ideas of the training is to teach the importance of all elements of communication and there are several feedback comments on how the learn has been connected in working life. Hence, it can be concluded that these have enabled further psychological development of the participators. On the societal level, which in this can also be considered to be the work community, the training has affected the relationships of the participants in the training, and this has been reflected on their feedback.

When it comes to the need for the training, the starting point of the participants is the fact that they have risen to leadership positions from a strong background of working with hard skills, which is common in the technological industry. Leadership requires interaction with subordinates, which requires soft skills. Most of the participants had only months of leadership experience and had recently been appointed to the position. From this it can be determined that with a new position new skills need to be learnt and therefore the training held was valid. In addition to this, at the time, the organization did not have any other training covering similar topics planned.

When considering the needs of the working life in the industry the training has provided the participants with support and some new tools for development in communication. As discussed in the theoretical framework one of the most important skills a leader has is the ability to communicate with employees and with the background of working with specific hard skills this may not be as strong in the beginning.

When analysing the effectiveness of the training in relation to lifelong willingness and motivation to learn it is a challenge to evaluate the training. However, the author hopes that by taking unfamiliar and that is traditionally considered as unrelated to leadership development, like horses, and combining that with working life, has created openness in the pilot group participants. This experience has shown something new to the participants,

and how something very diverse can develop skills needed in working life, and by that drive further enthusiasm to learn more.

Isotalus and Rajalahti (2017, 23) consider the measurements for interaction skills to be efficiency and meaningfulness. Efficiency meaning that not too much time or effort is used to get to the wanted result. Meaningfulness means that the interaction serves the goal of the message. They also consider ethical principles. When comparing this from the perspective of working with horses:

1. Efficiency is also seen with horses. Those who are able to send correct messages in the right way see immediate and precise results
2. Meaningfulness a horse can be encouraged but it needs to be done meaningfully. A pat on the back is a punishment if it is done with too much force.
3. It is simply not possible to lie to a horse as their intentions are not similar as humans and they do not understand the concept of lying.

7.5 Pilot group findings

Finding 1: Equine leadership development training is a positive experience.

The held pilot training has shown potential when it comes to implementing a training that is an interesting concept to the participants and into which they take participate with a positive mindset and willingness to learn something new. The overall feeling of being at the stables and working with horses has been positive from the participant perspective. The training has been rewarded with top marks by the participants and special remarks have been given for the opportunity to truly focus on the training rather than having a constant need to check emails etc.

The author found that using horses in leadership development benefitted the participants and that the participants found this experience surprisingly enjoyable.

Finding 2: Interaction skills can be developed with equine leadership development training.

Interaction has the aim to communicate something and consists of verbal and non-verbal messages. Equine leadership development training focuses on non-verbal communication as this is the methods horses use solely in communication. Hence, the participants focus on non-verbality and receive feedback on this from the horse. To be able to send convincing messages all elements of communication need to be in line and should not contradict each other. By understanding non-verbal communication of oneself it becomes easier to look at the cues sent by others.

Equine leadership development training offers the possibility to learn from oneself on a deeper level as it is set in an unconventional location that forces participants to focus. This brings up potentially unfamiliar emotions in a strange environment and surrounding and through that new behavior which can be analyzed in good spirit. Different and amended behavior can be tried several times to see what works best, due to the nature of the horse, which allows immediate corrections to be made without bias.

Finding 3: Developing confidence in an uncertain situation is visible in equine leadership training.

When the pilot group participants were reflecting to the training two of the participants commented on feeling proudness from being able to get the horse to work well. For some, confidence was gained through more 'negative' feelings like apprehension and nervousness, which were then followed by the feelings of proudness and pleasantness after working with the horse.

Initially the author had utilized this idea when constructing the training and that working with such a large animal successfully could bring a natural feeling of success and therefore enhance self-confidence. Confidence was one of the elements in the external perception questionnaire respondents saw to be of importance in a modern leader.

Finding 4: Equine leadership development training shows that not everything can be controlled.

For some discussions it seems that leading with command and control is still evident, but in the modern environment workers this leadership method is not applicable. Also, the respondents to the questionnaire on external perceptions felt that a leader should not be overly controlling.

The participants found interesting and eye opening that with a horse it is not possible to be in control of everything, as there are always disrupting external factors around that can affect the reactions of the horse. This is related to the comment by the participant on the horse losing a shoe, and this was discussed in the demonstration part of the pilot training and the competition situation where the human is not always able to affect what happens outside the ring and how that affects the horse. This also applies to working with humans but seems not to be easily understood.

Finding 5: Team collaboration can be improved with equine leadership development training.

The training did not only give a possibility to develop personal leadership skills, but also gave the participants a possibility to build better relationships with each other. Infact, when it comes to this group, the training day seems to have had special value in the group's social competence and how they are able to collaborate and communicate more efficiently with each other with a positive mindset.

The author has found that the external environment and from experiencing something unordinary together has enabled the participants to open up, bond and find support from each other. For the participants, this can ease collaboration at the office and a better working environment for all.

Finding 6: Participants want to have more interaction with horses

In their feedback the participants implied on wanting to have more experience of working with horses. The author would see it fit to amend the pilot training day to suit this recommendation.

7.5.1   Results and their meaningfulness for Company X

After the pilot day was conducted the author can make the following recommendations to Company X.

1. People who are moving to a new position as a leader and do not have a lot of experience on the matter should attend a similar training where basics of interaction are discussed. These people are moving to the people business from a highly technological background, where social skills have not paid such an important role.
2. The pilot group leaders have not had any activities together outside the office before this training. This has also affected their feeling of communality and potentially caused some friction in the internal relationships. Based on the discussion with the participant there was a noticeable difference when it came to acknowledging other leaders at the office. Hence, it can be concluded that the training day brought the people together. This enables transparency and openness at the workplace.
3. Being outside the office gave the possibility to concentrate on the learning experience and learning from practical exercises was found useful.
4. The participants have commented their major learnings to be related to leadership qualities and how everything cannot always be controlled. In addition to this they learn about communication, and especially how body language plays a significant role and.

As a recommendation, with a slightly developed training day, the author would suggest a new training to be held to the same group to encourage practice as suggested by Goleman's guidelines for emotional competence training, organize a similar experience to a new group of leaders arise, or arrange for the senior leaders of the Organization to participate in a similar training day, which would be adapted to their needs. The author feels that with the group of senior leaders there is significant tension and with the help of horses and a surrounding which is new to all these tensions could be released and internal relationships improved.

7.5.2   Pilot group training development suggestions

The pilot group facilitator (author) received feedback that the participants would have wanted more activities from horses earlier on. Hence, as a development area the future trainings should use less time on theory that is not relevant to working with horses. In the pilot group training this part was conducted by the external consultant. The participants want to have more experience-based activities with horses, and interaction with each other. The external consultant commented the same and that the day should consist more of activities and interactions with horses. The consultant suggested to pair up the participants with each other to receive peer support, this would also help to form bonds with each other. By eliminating the theoretical lecture the training could be made more uniform as it would be consistently working with horses without interruptions.

The facilitator would see that with the current concept the number of participants of six should not be exceeded per group. With too many participants there will not be enough time to facilitate and support learning by the professionals. In addition to this, growing the group would require more horses and facilitators to maintain a safe environment for the training participants.

To investigate the effects of the training in the leaders more specifically, more individual level analysis is needed. This measurement could be done by gathering information on the level of leadership interaction before and after the training from the leader in questions' subordinates. From this data a comparative analysis on interaction development could be made. This would give more external insights to the results in practice and enhance the validity of the thesis.

7.6 Summarising findings

This thesis answers the research questions based on the theoretical findings, questionnaire and interview data and a held pilot group training. The main question is ''how to develop leadership interaction skills with the use of equines?''. To understand the context better three sub questions were formed ''What is interaction?'', ''What is leadership?'' and '' What kind of equine training is applicable to be used in leadership interaction competence development?''.

When looking the results, it is obvious that soft skills are becoming more and more important in work life and in leadership. Modern employees are highly educated and need leaders with strong communication skills. Leadership, and leadership communication, play an important role in employee satisfaction. (Madlock 2008, 62). Isotalus and Rajalahti (2017, 50, 160) discussed how the work of a leader mostly consists of different interactions with stakeholders, and how no leader-subordinate relationship can exist without interaction, which makes successful interaction an essential skill in leadership. Furthermore, the World Economic Forum (2017) confirms that soft skills are becoming more important for employers when recruiting, and that the amount of collaborative work between leaders and employees has increased by 50% in the twenty years. Leaders need to recognize the importance of interaction skills and develop themselves further to enable maximum employment satisfaction and longer work relationships. This is important for the organization. As Isotalus and Rajalahti's (2017, 47) discuss the relationship of a leader and subordinate have effects on the results of the organization.

Implementing equines to experiential learning can be successful in leadership interaction development. As an approach, this can provide an engaging and different way for individuals to learn new behavior. The approach considers the importance and effect of emotions and non-verbality in communication.

The process and results of this thesis has formed a good base to start using equines in leadership development and to develop the training further. As a response to the main research question '*how to develop leadership interaction skills with the use of equines*?'' the leaders of today need to develop their interaction skills (behavior), which includes the need to use and understand emotional competency. Non-verbal communication is often based on emotions and communicating these successfully is a challenge. When one is emotionally intelligent, one is aware of and can utilize emotions successfully which develops communication.

In practice, this means that leadership interaction is developed with equines by doing hands on exercises with the animal and immediately reflecting on the behaviour that is received from it. These exercises can help with understanding emotions and developing the execution of non-verbal communication. Horses sense and react to human emotions and non-verbal communication visibly and honestly. This makes them good behavioral mirrors and learning aids. In addition to this, horses do not judge based on previous experiences, which enables a new start when it comes to trying to correct human behavior.

Steelman and Rutkowski (2004) discuss how leadership can be stressful and face difficult situations. Bal, Campbell and McDowell-Larsen (2008) state that challenging situations causes physiological reactions, which can affect behavior. Roberts (2013) discusses how he has learnt to control his heart beat as horses will have a strong reaction to this, which is why it is important to learn control and to remain in a relaxed state. The author believes that the same skill would benefit leaders when dealing with complex matters.

To respond to the question ''What is leadership?'' it was important to find out what leadership is and what it consists of. As there is no one single definition of leadership, leadership paradigms were used and compared. It was found that the old paradigms rely on subordination and being controlling, whereas the new paradigms are about being able to influence others and drive employees to the desired goal.

The essence of leadership has been transforming during the years as employees and their skill requirements are changing. As employees conduct work based on knowledge, their requirements for leadership have changed and traditional of organizing and managing doesn't work anymore. Leadership is about empowering and supporting employees to work to the best of their ability. Hence, the modern core of leadership is about communication and interacting with the employees.

To respond to the second sub question ''What is interaction?'', this thesis investigated interaction from the communication perspective. Communication was found to be a highly social activity and a key element in human relationships that consists of sending verbal and non-verbal messages. Although, humans are born with the ability to communicate, being successful in interpersonal communication does not come naturally and requires learning. Non-verbal communication is based on expressing emotions and feelings. In interaction, the way one comes across can be even more dependent on the sent non-verbal communication than verbal communication. If non-verbal and verbal communication are sending different messages the message being sent becomes weak,

and the sender can lose trustworthiness. This makes succeeding in non-verbal communication highly important for leaders especially.

To answer the final question '' what kind of equine training is applicable to be used in leadership interaction competence development?'' theoretical and practical investigations were made. Horses have been used in different areas of therapy with positive medical and educational effects. The base for these is interaction. As animals, they communicate solely using non-verbal communication. As they can feel and read human bio chemical reactions, like heartbeat rate, it means feelings cannot be hidden from them. For a human, this means there is a constant need to be aware of and in control of what is being communicated non-verbally, and how the human feelings are affecting the animal. As leaders are required to work more with feelings and emotions, working with horses brings them closer to understanding their significance in communication.

Horses can be used in leadership development, but the training needs to be built correctly to emphasize this if wanted. Otherwise the horse's reactions and their meaning may easily go unnoticed and have no teaching effect. In communication training horses give immediate and honest feedback when they see incorrect behavior, which is an important factor when developing emotional intelligence skills. Depending on the training need, horses can be used as aids to enhance team spirit between participants. In general, for developing behavior related matters, horses are good learning aids as they require hands on work and participants learn from personal experiences.

Roberts (2002) shares combines a fair amount of ideas from human work life and working with horses. As there are notable similarities, the author would see the use of horses to be applicable also based on this. As Roberts discusses, Dominating situations can be found at a workplace where dominance can be social power or work hierarchy. The old mentality of a traditional horse trainer was that horses were 'beasts' that needed to be broken into submission. This has similarities when it comes to how some managers have considered their employees and how they need to be under control at all times and could be considered as ''expendable parts of a machine''. (Roberts 2002, 260-297.) An environment which relies on punishment and is based on fear, can perform, but will not strive innovation, what is needed in the modern working environment. It is the same with horses, one can force a horse to cooperate, but it will not give its optimal performance. In order to get the best, the motivation needs to come freewill and it cannot be forced. (Roberts 2002, 514.)

8 Conclusions

In the modern work environment leadership is more about nurturing employees whereas in the past as a role it was more about of giving directions. Now, leaders need to listen to, persuade and negotiate with employees, which requires excellent communication skills and understanding emotions (Madlock 2008, 62). This is due to the fact that the actual work that employees do has been changing. Now, it is more and more based on knowledge and expertise rather than doing operational tasks. This has resulted in a change in employee needs and they are relying on leaders for support, rather than being told what to do.

Overall, in order to succeed in leadership different hard and soft skills are needed. However, strong people skills are of essence when it comes to support. Modern leadership should aim to create an emotional connection between the leader and subordinate by appealing to self-esteem and self-actualization. For a leader to be able to do this, and as discussed by Men (2014, 266.), the most important tool for leaders is communication, which requires strong interpersonal and soft skills.

However, the likelihood of a person rising to a leadership position based on strong technical skills is high, which makes it risky when it comes to ensuring that leaders have strong enough skills for interacting with employees.

In this thesis interaction has been looked at from the communication perspective. It is about exchanging messages verbally and non-verbally between individuals that have some kind of a relationship between each other. Interaction can also have a building or at worst a demolishing effect on a relationship. Interaction can be affected by the emotional state, which can influence behavior and also affect others around, which is why understanding it on a deeper level is important. Interaction skills are an important part of leadership. It is not just about sending and receiving messages between a leader and employee, but it can have effects on the leader-follower relationship. As a skill, it can be learnt and developed in, some are more talented than others naturally.

Rouhiainen-Neunhäuserer (2009, 52) confirms how in modern learning the learnee gains new knowledge practically, with social interaction of others in a creative way. With support to this, to develop leadership interaction competence with equines, the training needs to allow room for personal observations and learning from a social experience in a positive way. As interaction in a personal trait, the training should focus on exercises helping the individual.

Successful learning relating to behaviour cannot happen by theoretically discussing how an equine may react to human communication and the reasons behind it. Physical contact and presence in the same space with the animal are needed to bring things to life and make the situation and learning meaningful. Also, Isotalus and Rajalahti (2017, 69) encourage learning communication in practice and by receiving feedback. By physically working with a horse and communicating with it receiving personal and immediate feedback becomes possible.

All in all, the equine assisted learning needs to use experiences and action-based methods where learning happens through different interactive exercises with horses. Combining horses to experiential learning leaders have the opportunity to have an active role in their learning process where they can see their actions reflected immediately from the horse.

When it comes to determining the exact details of the applicable equine training that should be used the exact details remain unknown due to the little data available. In Finland, possibilities for this training type should be extended to allow more possibilities for companies to use this training method. This would also enable further study opportunities on the topic and its successfulness.

8.1 Conclusions from the held Pilot training

Based on the held pilot training the author has found that working/training with horses can support leadership skill development in a creative and effective way and as a method it is well accepted by the participants positively. The training setting put all the participants on the same level where no-one was in a stronger position since none of the participants had extensive knowledge on horses. The unfamiliarity and lack of knowledge seemed to open up group wide interest in the topic and eagerness to learn something new. Equines, will not act with the command of spoken words, which makes them good for the use of training non-verbal skills. Equine assisted training can be provided to all company employees and is not dependent on their work experience or current skills.

Developing communication requires feedback. As animals, equines are suitable for training purposes as the feedback they give comes without delay and honestly. Humans, on the other hand think and weigh their opinions before they show reactions in the pilot training it could be noticed that the feedback coming through horses was accepted positively by the participants, even if a mistake was made by the human.

Being at a different location benefitted the participants as similar distraction possibilities than what are experience at the work place were eliminated. Also, the honest interest in horses kept everyone focused without having the need to check emails throughout the day.

The day is based on learning where leaders can participate in different type of activities in groups or individually by interacting with horses. With specializing the day, the training schedule and content can be directed to different groups and problems. The held pilot group training and its practical approach and using an interactive setting was appreciated by the participants. In addition to this, they felt that being outside the office gave them the experience to build better relationships with each other and focus on the training. To validate further success from using equines in leadership training more similar trainings need to be held.

To develop the pilot training further the author would suggest the following changes:
- Less theoretical talk, more exercises and interaction with horses
    - The theoretical part to be the introduction on the importance of non-verbal communication in leadership and how horses communicate
        - As per the guideline of Goleman: Focusing on non-verbal communication to ensure program success
- Group/pair exercises for participants with horses
    - As per the guideline of Goleman: Support can be given from participant to another who are trying to make similar changes
- Give more individual feedback to participants (encouragement, development)
    - As per the guideline of Goleman: feedback encourages and helps change
- Suggest multiple trainings for the group to encourage practice and behavioral change
    - As per the guideline of Goleman: habits (behavior) change slowly and a single training is the beginning but not sufficient by itself

In the next chapter the author will take these development suggestions into consideration and redesign the equine training day.

8.1.1 Redesigned equine training day framework

Table 4 Redesigned equine training day content and schedule

Time	Part	Content	Exercise	Needed
9.15 – 9.30	Arrival and settling down / coffee and breakfast			• Breakfast supplies by facilitator 1
9.30 – 10. 15	**Part 1** Introduction to the facility and horse riding	• Commonalities of leadership and horse riding • Communicating with horses	• Observation on demonstrator rider • Discussions together	• Facilitator 1, Horse 1 and demonstrator rider
10.15- 11.30	**Part 2** Working with horses Practical exercises with horses	• Non-verbal communication improvement	• Team/pair work with a horse	• 2 facilitators • Horse 2 and 3
11.30 – 12.15	Lunch			• Lunch supplies by facilitator
12.15 – 15.00	**Part 3** Working with horses Practical exercises with horses	• Non-verbal communication improvement	• Individual exercises o Grooming o Mounted and unmounted exercises	• 2 facilitators • Horse 1 and 2
15.00 – 15.30	**Part 4** Wrap up	• Learning reflections	• Discussion directed by main facilitator	• Main Facilitator (1)

The author would not change **Part 1** of the training day as the discussion with the demonstrating rider brought up interesting points and some leaders were intrigued by how little signs the rider gives non-verbally to the horse. This part gives an authentic possibility to introduce the importance of non-verbal communication and leadership when working with horses. The author sees the part with the demonstration to bring important new learnings to the participants, and it gives the participants the possibility to see how two living beings with no common tongue really communicate in a purely non-verbal manner when working. In addition to this, the first part brought up excellent conversation on competition situations and how one cannot always be in control of all the things that are happening around a competition arena, trust and support to the horse need to be given for it to do its best. The respondents to the questionnaire on external perceptions also implied on the importance of a leader not being over controlling hence it is good that this is brought up.

As suggested by Goleman to focus the training on what the participants need and in general to simplify the training structure to be more uniform the author would remove the

initial **Part 2** on leadership theory and exercises, which was held by the external consultant. This time of one hour and fifteen minutes would be replaced by more exercises with horses and focus on non-verbal communication and leading the horse.

Furthermore, to bring some new elements to the training the author would utilize the findings from the pilot training day and that it had a positive impact on team bonding. Furthermore, in her feedback the HR consultant suggested to pair up the participants with each other to receive peer support. Hence, the new exercises with horses would be done in pairs to enable the participants emotional intelligence competency framework social skills, like collaboration and building bonds. The author would not see it to be sensible to ignore this matter as the success on bringing people together came quite naturally and can be developed further. Overall, in the participant the feedback as a development area it was suggested to have more exercise with horses, which is why this part shall undergo the most change. For each horse and pair of humans one facilitator would be needed for feedback purposes and it would bring more safety to the participants. The facilitator should always be experienced with horses and be able to give supportive and positive feedback.

Part 3 would remain quite the same with minor adjustments. The participants would be doing individual exercises with the horse from the ground (grooming, lunging and in general interacting with the horse) and by riding. This part also requires two facilitators to make sure adequate amounts of feedback are given and to encourage the participants further to develop and understand non-verbal communication. This, keeping in mind Goleman's suggestion that poorly given feedback on weaknesses and strengths can cause emotional reactions, which becomes unmotivating. Also, as stated by Goleman's guidelines keeping up motivation is important as this affects learning.

Furthermore, as not every participant can have their own horse to work with simultaneously, due to safety reasons and the fact that not all horses can be used in these types of situations, the facilitator would propose that if at all possible a third facilitator could take the waiting participants to the stable to groom a horse while they are waiting for their turn. This would give them more interaction time with horses and something more constructive to do.

Finally, to wrap things up the participants would undergo an open discussion with the facilitator/s to discuss their learnings of the day. Relating to Goleman's guidelines on motivation it is important that the facilitator helps to connect and direct the discussion to how the learnings can help the participants do their work better. Also, as per Goleman's

guideline on encouraging practice the facilitator/s should encourage the participants to practice outside of work and at work and point that the held training is the beginning, but mastering a competence requires repetition and practice. This would also be a good opportunity to encourage the participants to come again for equine training to see if the exercises with the horses are easier, which could build their confidence and to learn even more.

The author would see the maximum number of participants to be six, due to the fact that there are only so many horses and facilitators that can be used for this purposes and to make sure enough individual attention is given to each participant.

8.2   Learning reflections

This master's thesis has given the author excessive amount of new knowledge on leadership, interpersonal communication and its elements, and using equines in development. It has confirmed that using equines in leadership development is a valid idea. The author also learnt about the methods of conducting a study and doing theoretical research. The overall communication management programme has enabled the author to design a research that is of personal importance and combine it to theory, and by this help to argue the validity of the idea.

In working life, this thesis has given the author a lot of support working as a HR, which also includes supporting leaders and employees. Furthermore, it has given tools for the future towards the idea of developing a business around using equines in leadership development.

The most challenging part of this thesis has been to make a very abstract idea into a structured research paper with valid theories. However, while investigating different theories and literature around the subject the author has begun to find more confidence in this topic and appreciate theoretical support. The author would have liked to conduct more in practice trainings, but due to schedules it was not possible. More training days would have enabled more data samples and verify the findings. If starting a similar study now, the author would approach organizations with more confidence and ask for pilot group participants.

Throughout the process, while exploring news articles and theory the author realized how much leadership theories have in common with equines and how these two can fulfill each

other. The author feels like that with this study something new for the Finnish equine industry and leadership development possibilities have been found and explored.

8.3   Reliability and validity

The reliability of the study reflects to the possibility of receiving the same results if the test is redone. The more consistent the results are the higher the reliability is (Carmines & Zeller 1979, 11). When it comes to the reliability of this study there are limitations in testing the idea in practice and relating it to existing theory. Studies on equine therapy for disabled have been made but are not necessarily comparable to individuals in working life, whom are assumingly not suffering from serious mental illness, or physical disability. To validate this thesis, further trainings need to be held to gather more data on the usefulness of the training and how exercises with horses develop leaders in working life. However, it must be noted that as equine trainings are unique in nature strictly comparable results cannot be found, the number of variables per training day is large and cannot all be copied. Also, as the training held was the first by the author, the future trainings would undergo development, which could produce differences in results.

Internal validity considers if the results of the study are happening due to the expected causal relationships between the variables. External validity questions if the results can be generalized to another setting. (Taylor 2013, 10)

In this study the internal validity is challenged by the fact that the pilot training has only been completed with one group and there is no other group to compare at this point due to the limitations of previous research. It is possible that the pilot group training participants have been affected by social interactions from the others, like the pilot group facilitator, and have felt like another participant is getting more attention, which could affect their feelings and questionnaire responses. However, this has been minimized by putting together a small pilot group to enable enough individual time for facilitator-participant interaction.

External validity, and the possibility of generalizing the results are fairly weak, as the field of using equines in leadership development is very limited, and this thesis has only investigated one pilot group. To be able to generalize and validate the results further, more samples (pilot group trainings) need to be held preferably using a random sample of leaders from different industries, as this thesis is based on one group of leaders working in the technological industry with similar backgrounds.

There is a risk for author bias, as the author has a high interest towards introducing equine assisted learning to the business world in Finland. The bias is unavoidable but has been minimized by using externals in data collection. On the other hand, in the rapidly changing world new ideas need to be explored and tested. All in all, the author has done her best to investigate this matter as objectively as possible. Another concern related to the validity of this research is the limitation of external comments and if the respondents are affected by social desirability bias. This means the responses to the questionnaires are not based on honesty but on social expectations. With the small sample size of the pilot group high level of anonymity cannot be guaranteed.

8.4   Study limitations and future research recommendations

The author is very aware that this study represents a starting point of investigating and using equines in leadership interaction skills development in Finland.

Reliable and directly comparable studies with theoretical frameworks have not been found. This study has not compared the findings to any other related studies, as they refer to the use of horses in therapeutic purposes. Hence, it does not offer a possibility to compare leadership development, which has no therapeutic requirements. This limits the analysis of the thesis findings. The author would recommend carrying out further pilot trainings to gather a larger data sample. To improve the training day context the focus should be more on practical exercises with horses.

Furthermore, this study does not investigate how leaders have utilized their potential learnings from the pilot group training in practice. Therefore, the author suggests that to measure the long-term success and usefulness of equine training more in practice equine assisted trainings would be held. The importance and effects on leadership interaction need to be studied further both on an individual level for employees, but also how they affect the work community. Hence, to gather further understanding on the effects of the training for leaders, it would be recommendable to investigate how subordinates see the leaders prior and post training and if there is a changer.

To validate the understanding gained from the making of this thesis, further equine development trainings need to be held. By initiating more pilot group trainings comparative development analysis can be conducted.

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Appendix 1. Article themes

Article No	Theme Search	Themes revisited	Themes connecting to other articles
1	Horses help develop leadership skills for hobbyist girls	• Girls with horse hobbies become better leaders when adults • Hobby	• Leadership skills • Horses enable leadership skills
2	Horses help develop leadership skills for hobbyist girls	• Horse skills can benefit other parts of life • Leadership skills can be learnt by the social environment of the stable and learning large animal control • Hobby	• Leadership skills • Horses enable leadership skills • Social aspect

3	Leaders learning from horses	• Horses coaching people
		• Horse skills vs life skills
		• Psychological safety and not feeling abandoned from failure
		• Learning behavior
		• Horses sensing feelings
		• Emotional control
		• Body language
		• Being caring towards others
			• Leadership skills
			• Horses enable leadership skills
			• Social aspect
			• Feeling
			   o Emotional intelligence
			• Communication
			   o Element of emotional intelligence

4	Horses as learning tools	• Horses used for a pedagogical purpose
		• Developing social interaction
		• Communality, functionality, experience and dialogue
		• Obtain feelings from working with the animal
		• Getting success from controlling a large animal
			• Horses in skill development
			• Social aspect
			• Communication
			   o Element of Emotional intelligence
			• Feelings
			   o Element of Emotional intelligence

5	Skills leaders need	• Specialists value emotional intelligence in leadership • Self awareness, interaction skills and emotional intelligence are seen important in leadership • Human proximity	• Leadership skills • Elements of emotional intelligence • Social aspect
6	Skills leaders need	• Affect on feelings with others • Ability to control feelings	• Leadership skills • Feelings o elements of emotional intelligence • Social aspect

Appendix 2. HR Consultant interview 1 questions (initial mapping)

- What are important skills for leaders?
- What do you think of modern leaders?
- Why are interaction skills specifically important?
- How can we improve leaders?
- What is a good training environment?
  - o What are the downsides to having trainings at the workplace?
  - o How does the consultant see horses in leadership training?

Master Thesis on leadership interaction development

Hello,

I am writing a Master thesis on leadership interaction and its development with the help of equines (horses). Interaction (in Finnish: vuorovaikutus) is looked at from the communication perspective and it is something that happens between two or more people. For example, having a conversation is interaction.

The main theories of the thesis are around interpersonal communication, emotional intelligence and leadership.

To gather more data on the topic I would appreciate your thoughts on the following questions. You can answer in English or Finnish. The answers will be handled anonymously and are only for my use in this Thesis.

To you, what is successful interaction?

Your answer

To you, what are essential skills for effective communication?

Your answer

On a scale of 1-5 how would you rate the interaction skills of your current lead?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Very bad	○	○	○	○	○	Excellent

To you, in general, what are the most important qualities/skills of a modern leader?

Your answer

When communicating, which do you find more important:

○ Verbal communication (spoken words)

○ Non Verbal communication (e.g. facial expressions, the tone of voice, gestures through body language)

○ Not sure

○ Both

Any additional comments you would like to give on verbal/non verbal communication?

Your answer

Emotional intelligence is about being able to recognize the feelings of your own and others and being able to manage them. It is also about understanding how these can have an effect on e.g. communication or behavior. Do you think that this is important in leadership and communication? Why?

Your answer

On a scale of 1-5 how emotionally intelligent do you feel that your leader is?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not emotionally intelligent at all	○	○	○	○	○	Very emotionally intelligent

Any additional comments you would like to give on emotional intelligence?

Your answer

Which of these would you prefer?

☐ 'classroom' and lecture based environment

☐ Learning based on personal experiences and observation

☐ Trainings held online (e.g. webinars)

☐ Trainings held at the office with a professional trainer

☐ Trainings held outside the office with a professional trainer

On a scale of 1-5, do you think leaders should receive more training on soft skills? (Soft skills are interpersonal (people) skills and includes e.g. communication skills, listening skills, and empathy)

	1	2	3	4	5	
Not necessary	○	○	○	○	○	Absolutely

Do you have any additional comments you would like to give?

Your answer

SUBMIT

Appendix 4. Pre-pilot day training questionnaire

Pre-training day questionnaire

Pilot Group leadership training

Your name

Short-answer text

How long have you been in a leadership position?

Short-answer text

As a lead, what do you find to be easy in your work?

Long-answer text

As a lead, what do you find to be the most challenging in your work?

Long-answer text

What kind of leadership do you appreciate? If there is a very good lead in the past you have worked with please give examples why this person was good

Long-answer text

What are the most important aspects to you in communication?

Long-answer text

As a lead, what do you find to be the most challenging in your work?

Long-answer text

What kind of leadership do you appreciate? If there is a very good lead in the past you have worked with please give examples why this person was good

Long-answer text

What are the most important aspects to you in communication?

Long-answer text

Are you familiar with the concept of emotional intelligence? Do you feel like this is important in leadership? In what kind of situations do you feel this could be found/be important?

Long-answer text

:::

How do you handle your own emotions at work/or in a conflict situation?

Long-answer text

Is there something in particular that you would like to discuss during our training day?

Long-answer text

Appendix 5. Equine assisted training company websites used.

Name, location, URL	Location	URL
EGLD	USA	http://www.egld.eu/
Coaching with horses USA	USA	https://coachingwithhorses.com/leadership-with-horses/
Equine Connection	USA	https://www.equineconnection.ca/leadership-development
Medicine Horse Ranch	USA	http://medicinehorseranch.org/corporate-trainings/leadership/
Lead Change	UK	http://www.leadchange.com/
Nirsara	UK	https://www.nirsara.com/
Little oasis equine Note! Seems to be affected with malware in 2019	USA	https://www.littleoasisequine.com/leadership-development.html
Equine Alchemy	USA	http://www.equinealchemy.com/lead/g
Rajakorpi Ranch	Finland	https://www.annaporola.com/hevostenkoulutuspalvelut/17
Oicon Oy	Finland	http://www.oicon.fi/personal-leadership-with-horses
Horses and coaching	France	https://www.horsesandcoaching.com/info
Tarja Vartiainen Consulting	France	http://www.tarja-vartiainen.com/en/home/

Appendix 6. Equine assisted training companies in relation to theory

Company	Description	Communication Theory	Emotional intelligence focus		Hier.model of man. competencies	Argument	Skills developed
			Personal	Social			
1	Horses pay attention at an energetic level to themselves and others, have flexible leadership skills to suite the environment and do not buy into politics.	Self competence Interpretive competence	Self-awareness	Social skills	Intrapersonal competencies	Receive direct, clean and timely feedback on how they are performing. This type of feedback ensures participants learn very quickly, easily and accurately	Increased Self Belief Increased confidence Shared leadership Increased awareness Approaches to suite diverse situations Lead in uncertain situations
2	As prey animals, the "flight" instincts become instant mirrors and non-judgmental feedback mechanisms for humans. They respond to a person's intentions, emotions and thoughts that are conveyed subconsciously through body language. How to communicate more effectively, face their fears and manage their emotions, and become more consistent and congruent with actions."	Message Competence Non-verbal communication	Self-awareness Self-regulation	Social skills	Social competences	respond to a person's intentions, emotions and thoughts that are conveyed subconsciously through body language. Through the experience of observing a horse's response to their requests and directions, each person learns how to communicate more effectively, face their fears and manage their emotions, and become more consistent and congruent with their actions." Face fears and learn new behaviors to gain personal power and respect.	- Make choices and take actions based on courage and awareness verses automatic, 'learned' responses. - Build trust in relationships and teams. - Develop skills to work through uncomfortable, emotionally charged situations. - Move from conflict into resolution and agreement more quickly. - Experience breakthroughs that increase the depth of Emotional Intelligence. -Expand cohesiveness and productivity within teams and partnerships.
3	"Studies have shown that the majority of managers are promoted into leadership positions because they excel technically, but most have never demonstrated or been trained in the	Role competence Interpretive competence		Social skills	Social competences	the more senses that are engaged, the greater the likelihood that new learning will be retained	Build flexibility into their leadership style to improve team performance in achieving business objectives -Manage diverse teams through effective communication skills

	art of leading others.''						-Build engagement with team members that fosters team spirit and greater productivity -Develop understanding of interpersonal behavioural dynamics and the importance it plays within a leadership role
4	Horses provide the perfect model as we look at leadership and teams in the workplace	Self competence Role competence	Self-awareness Self-regulation Motivation	Social skills	Intrapersonal competence Social competence		Keys to Art of Leadership: Strengthen Communication Clarity and Unification of Purpose (Goals) New Perspectives and 360 Degree Awareness Increased Confidence, Flexibility, Resilience and Presence Increased Efficiency Ability to Manage Emotions and Conflict Resolution Develop Trust and Respect Expand our Sphere of Influence Turn Obstacles into Opportunities Become More Effective Leaders for Our Teams
5	Horses are adept at picking up and responding to human intention and non-verbal communication.	Message Competence Non-verbal communication	Self-awareness	Social skills	Intrapersonal competence social competence	Knowledge informs; skills are developed through practice – an experiential approach which allows participants to observe and learn from the impact of their behaviour. The experiential nature of the learning ensures high transferability to the workplace.''	''Leaders require a dynamic combination of self-awareness, multiple intelligences and highly developed interpersonal skills.

6	Presence' and 'Emotional Intelligence' are key leadership traits required to be able to inspire and engage large teams. How to constructively to lead the horse, without force. This is the beginning of tapping into a leadership style that is inspiring, engaging and goal oriented.	Role Competence Self Competence Goal Competence	Self-awareness Self-regulation Motivation	Social skills	Intrapersonal competence Social competence	-When we are in front of 700 kilograms of horse, we learn to become fully present to our whole self, especially our emotional state, as they pick up our tiniest feelings. -The ground exercises with horses make us fully aware of our emotions.	Presence' and 'Emotional Intelligence' how to manage and use emotions Motivation
7	Teams learn to how to use their equine partners, to heighten their awareness.	Self competence	Self-awareness Self-regulation		Intrapersonal competence	-Horses are used because of their innate ability to recognize and identify internal frustration and conflict immediately. -At times horses are used as barometers for participants to gauge their internal energy. This helps them to learn what they need to change (in their approach) to find a different result.	
8	Leadership Development with horses brings to life over fifteen years of research, experimentation, and experience. You will take-away (and own) horse-inspired insights on the nonverbal elements of exceptional communication, action and leadership to benefit your workplaces and relationships.	Message Competence Interpretive competence Self competence		Social skills	Intrapersonal competence Social competence	Owning our strengths and challenging self-limiting stories. Understanding how unconscious behaviors influence our leadership and team performance.	Leadership Development Benefits: Navigating complexity and uncertainty. Developing collective leadership and collaboration skills. Developing authenticity and presence. Achieving adaptive leadership. -Growing Emotional and Social Intelligence. Aligning intent with message. Leading with real authority.

						-Development and comfort with conflict resolution skills. Commitment to individual and team progress assessments for sustainable growth and results.
9	Mitä me voisimmekaan oppia hevosilta?Läsnäolon taitoa, itsensä tiedostamista ja hyväksymistä.Mitä jos alkaisimmekin katsomaan eteemme? Emme vilkuilisi enää olan taakse, kuinka emme onnistuneet aikaisemmin tai kuinka valitsimme väärin.	Self competence	Self-awareness	Social skills Empathy	Intrapersonal competencies	Hevosten kanssa oleminen ja työskentely inspiroi meitä toimimaan myös paremmin omassa työssämme, sekä perheidemme parissa.	Ottaisimme hevosista oppia ja alkaisimme ajattelemaan - Liikettä eteenpäin! Hevonen voi opettaa tarvittavaa empatiaa, johdonmukaisuutta, "omilla jaloilla seisomista", vuorovaikutusmallien hyväksymistä ja niiden uudelleen muokkaamista, palautteen vastaanottamista ja sen antajalle toimia reilusti, sanojensa mittaisena.

Appendix 7. Post-pilot day training questionnaire

Leadership training feedback

A big thank you for participating yesterday in our Pilot Group.
Please find a small questionnaire to provide feedback from yesterday, we would be grateful if you could spend some time answering these questions and digesting the experience.

Your honest comments are highly valued, so that we can do our best to develop this training.

How did you feel about the training day?

Your answer

Do you think other leads could benefit from this training? How? Why?

Your answer

What did you learn?

Your answer

How would you improve the training?

Your answer

Would you like to participate again in a similar training?

Your answer

How would you score the day as a whole?

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Waste of time	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	I would do it again

Are there any other comments/feedback you would like to give?

Your answer

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Appendix 8. HR Consultant reflections interview

- What did you think about the training day held?
- What would we do differently the next time?
- Do you know of any organisations in Finland that would have used or considered something similar?
- Would this suit any other organisations?
- Do you have any other comments?

Appendix 9. Pilot group participant reflections

- What kind of feelings did you experience from being at the stables/working with horses?
- Has it affected how you see others at work?
- Do you feel like the experience offered something to you on a personal level, what? Or Did the experience awaken some thoughts when it comes to personal development
- Did you learn something about yourself and your emotions?

Appendix 10. Goleman's guidelines for emotional competence training

Adapted from Goleman (2009, 250-252)

Guideline	Notes and best practice tips
Assess the job Design training based on a systematic needs assessment	• Design training based on a systematic needs assessment Note: Training for irrelevant competencies is pointless. • Best practice: Design a training based on a systematic needs assessment
Assess the individual The individual's profile of strengths and limitations should be assessed to identify what needs improving	• Note: There's no point in sending people for training in competencies they already have or do not need. • Best practice: Tailor training to the individual's needs
Deliver assessments with care Feedback on a persons strengths and weaknesses carries an emotional charge	• Note: Inept feedback can be upsetting: skillful feedback is motivating • Best practice: Use emotional intelligence in delivering initial evaluations of a person's emotional competence
Gauge readiness People are at differing levels of readiness	• Note: when people lack readiness, training is more likely to be wasted • Best practice: assess for readiness, and if someone is not yet ready, make cultivating readiness and initial focus
Motivate People learn to the degree they are motivated. E.g. by realizing that a competence is important to doing their job well, and making the competence a personal goal for change.	• Note: If people are unmotivated, training will lack effectiveness • Best practice: Make clear how training will pay off on thejob or for the individuals career, or be otherwise rewarding
Make change self-directed When people direct their learning program, tailoring it to their needs, circumstances, and motivation, learning is more effective.	• Note: One size fits all training programs fit no one specifically • Best practice: Have people choose their own goals for development and help them design their own plan for pursuing the,.
Focus on clear manageable goals Please need clarity on what the competence is and the steps needed to improve it.	• Note: Poorly focused or unrealistic programs for change lead to fuzzy results or failure. • Best practice: Spell out the specifics of the competence and offer a workable plan to get there
Prevent relapse Habits change slowly, and relapses and slips need not signal defeat	• Note: People can become discouraged by the slowness of change and the inertia of old habits • Best practice: Help people use lapses and slip-ups as lessons to prepare themselves better for the next time
Give performance feedback Ongoing feedback encourages and helps direct change	• Note: unclear feedback can send the training off track • Best practice: Design into the change plan feedback from supervisors, peers, friends, or anyone who can coach, mentor or give reviews on progress
Encourage practice Lasting change requires practice on and off the job	• Note: A single training is the beginning but not sufficient by itself • Best practice: Use opportunities at work and home and try new behaviors

Reinforce change People need recognition to feel the efforts in change matter	• Note: A lack of support is discouraging • Best practice: organization needs to show value to the change
Arrange support Other people who are trying to make similar changes can be of support	• Note: sole change is difficult • Best practice: Network of support and encouragement should be built